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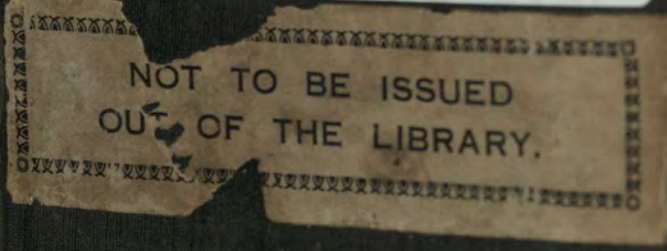
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MILMAN'S

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VOL. II.

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LONDON,
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET,
1840.

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SAMOR,

LORD OF THE BRIGHT CITY.

PREFACE.

THE Historians * of the Empire near the period of time, at which this Poem commences, make mention of a Constantine, who assumed the purple of the western empire, gained possession of Gaul and Spain, but was defeated and slain at the battle of Arles. He had a son named Constans, who became a monk, and was put to death at Vienne.

About the same time a Constantine appears in the relations of the old British Chronicles and Romances. He was brother of the king of Armorica, and became himself king, or rather an elected sovereign of the petty kings of Britain †, who continued their succession under the Roman dominion. He was called Vendigard ‡ and Waredur, the Defender and Deliverer. He had three sons, Constans, who became a hermit, and was murdered, either (for the traditions vary) by the Picts, by Vortigern, or by the Saxons; Emrys, called by the Latin writers Aurelius Ambrosius; and Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur. These two Constantines are here identified, and Vortigern supposed to have been named King of Britain, as the person of greatest authority and conduct in the wreck of the British army, defeated at Arles. Many, however, of the chiefs in the island advancing the hereditary right, before formally settled on the sons of Constantine, Vortigern, mistrusting the Britons, and pressed by invasions of the Caledonians, introduced the Saxons to check the barbarians and strengthen his own sovereignty.

* Gibbon, Chap. 31. † Whitaker, Hist. of Manchester.

‡ Lewis, Hist. of Britain.

The hero of the Poem is a historical character, as far as such legends can be called history. He appears in most of the chronicles as Edol, or Eldol, but the fullest account of his exploits is in Dugdale's Baronage, under his title of Earl of Gloucester. William Harrison, however, in the Description of Britain prefixed to Holinshed, calls him Eldulph de Samor. But all concur in ascribing to him the acts which make the chief subject of the fifth and last books of this Poem.

Most of our present names of places being purely Saxon, and the old British having little of harmony or association to recommend them, I have frequently, on the authority of Camden and others, translated them. Thus the Saxon Gloucester, called by the Britons Caer Gloew, is the Bright City. The Dobuni, the inhabitants of the Vales, are called by that name. Some few sanctioned by old usage of poetry and romance I retain, as Kent, Thanet, Cornwall. London is Troynovant, as the City of the Trinobantes.

Some passages in the Poem will be easily traced to their acknowledged sources, the poets of Greece and Italy; one, however, in the third book, relating to the Northern mythology, has been remarkably anticipated in a modern Poem. The honourable author may be assured that the coincidence is unintentional, as that part of this Poem was the earliest written, and previous to the appearance of his production.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

This poem, though not published, nor indeed quite completed, till after the success of "Fazio" had given me some encouragement, was commenced when I was an Eton boy, and almost finished when I was an undergraduate at Oxford. The original conception was preserved. I had at Eton the fancy for searching our old Chronicles for subjects for poetry; and at that buoyant period of youth we are sometimes gifted with (to the author at least) a happy ignorance of the magnitude of the work we undertake, and are the last to mistrust the sufficiency of our own powers for our noblest undertakings. Youth, once possessed with a notion of its poetic calling, is not disposed to take counsel of prudence or diffidence; if it did, it would rarely prepare the mind for producing anything of real value in riper years: if too hastily cooled down, it would in most cases be chilled into barren inactivity.

Where, as with myself, the insatiable love for various and desultory reading, particularly of every kind of poetry, combines with the early ambition of writing, there is not so much an inclination to imitate, as perhaps a presumptuous desire to rival, whatever makes a strong impression upon the fancy; hence in early poetry there will be continual reminiscences of other writers. This

will be consistent with much richness and even originality of fancy,—much truth in the delineation of external nature; that which will, of necessity, be deficient in depth, if not in reality, will be the knowledge of the human heart, and that wider acquaintance with human passion, and the motives of human conduct, which youth can only divine, mature age alone can obtain, in some cases, from melancholy personal experience, or at least from more extensive observation.

The fault with which "Samor" was, if severely, no doubt justly, charged, was the overloaded and artificial diction. That arose partly perhaps from unchastened juvenile taste, partly, however, from the ambition of creating that which I cannot but think the language still wants—narrative blank verse. The Miltonic versification is the triumph of poetic art; but that which contributes so much to its excellence,—its adaptation to its subject,—unfits it, to a certain degree, for common use. It soars and poises itself, as it were, uniformly at "the height of its great argument;" it is too solemn, stately, and august for subjects of less grave interest; its wonderful and sphere-like harmony seems as if it would not condescend to accord itself with mortal thoughts. We have many finished specimens of descriptive and of didactic or philosophical blank verse. I would instance, in the former class, a poem perhaps not much known, Mr. Crowe's "Lewesdon Hill;" in the latter, some parts of Akenside, and the manly and vigorous cadence of parts of "The Excursion." The high-wrought elegance of passages in Rogers's "Italy" has great charms to my ear; but I must acknowledge that I know not where to look for the perfect model of *narrative* blank verse; I seek in vain for that indwelling principle of harmony which, sustaining a long poem above the level of prose, adapts itself with

natural and unforced numbers to the infinite variety of thought, feeling, character, situation, interest, and even style, which must animate any long narrative poem which aspires to live. That "Samor" in any degree succeeded in filling this void in our poetry, I shall not, I trust, in mature age be suspected even of wishing to insinuate:

"Magnis tamen excidit ausis."

Be this as it may, in my youthful desire for the gratification of the ear as well as the mind and fancy, I no doubt indulged so much in the inversion and artificial collocation of words, as to sacrifice that first requisite of poetic as well as of prosaic language, perspicuity: the language, while I was studying the cadence and flow of the verse, became involved and intricate.

My object in the revision of "Samor" has been to make it more clear and intelligible, to give the interest of the story, the invention, and the poetry fair chance; but the corrections are confined to the language. I have altered nothing in the construction or arrangement, or in the general character of the poem.

—— ——— Et o! modo spiritus adsit,
Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.

MILTON. MANSUS.

——— the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom.

MILTON'S *Par. Lost*, book ix.

ERRATA.

Page 31, line 12, *But with*, dele *but*.

33, last line but one, for *fates* read *fate*.

94, line 17, at the end, for *erect* read *uplift*.

156, line 3, for ; read ,—for , read ;—for ; read ,

171, Argument, for *Port* read *Pont*.

176, last line, for *round* read *around*.

232, line 15, for *souls* read *soul*.

240, line 19, for *drooping* read *dropping*.

267, line 4, for *cast* read *casts*.

SAMOR.

BOOK I.

ARGUMENT.

Invocation to my country. Troynovant, the ancient London. King Vortigern. Return of the Saxons from the defeat of the Picts. Banquet in the Tower of London. Aneurin the Bard. Rowena. Cession of Kingdom of Kent to Pengist. Protest of Samor. Banks of the Thames. Interview between Samor and Vortigern. Rowena.

LAND of my birth, oh Britain! land beloved!
Whose tongue my song would speak, most proud
If not in strains unworthy. Beauteous Isle,
And plenteous! what though in thy atmosphere
Float not the taintless luxury of light,
The dazzling azure of the Southern skies;
Around thee the rich orb of thy renown
Spreads stainless, and unsullied by a cloud.
Though thy hills blush not with the purple vine,
And softer climes excel thee in the hue

And fragrance of thy summer fruits and flowers;
Nor flow thy rivers over golden beds;
Thou in the Soul of man, thy better wealth,
Art richest; nature's noblest produce thou,
The immortal Mind in perfect height and strength,
Bearest with lavish opulence; this thy right,
Thy privilege of climate and of soil,
Would I assert: nor, save thy fame, invoke,
Or Nymph, or Muse, that oft 'twas dream'd of old
By falls of waters under haunted shades
Her ecstasy of inspiration pour'd
O'er Poet's soul, and flooded all his powers
With liquid glory: so may thy renown
Burn in my heart, and give to thought and word
The aspiring and the radiant hue of fire.

Forth from the gates of Troynovant* hath pass'd
King Vortigern; the Princes of the Isle
Around him; on the walls, for then (though now
Boundless her mighty wilderness of streets,
Spreads in magnificence of multitude
And vast illimitable grandeur) walls
With jealous circuit and embattled range
Girt Britain's narrow Capital; where swarm'd
Eager her wondering citizens to see
The Monarch. Him the Saxon Hengist met,
And Horsa, with their bands in triumph led,

* The legendary and romantic name of London.

As from a recent victory; their blue eyes
Sparkled, and proud they shook their saffron hair
And o'er the bickering of their spears, the toss
Of ponderous mallets, the quick flash of swords,
Th' emblazon'd White Horse on their banners waved
Triumphant. Thus King Vortigern began:
"Welcome, Deliverers! of our kingdom's foes
Thrice-honour'd Conquerors, welcome! never more
Shall painted Caledonian o'er our realm
The chariots of his rapine wheel, so full
The desolation, havoc so complete
Hath smote and blasted in Erle Hengist's path.
The mouldering ruins of our Roman wall,
Leagued with the terror of the Saxon name,
Shall be defence more mighty, than when soared
Its battlements unbroken, and above
Th' imperial Eagle shook its wings of gold.
Oh, toil'd with victory, burthen'd with renown,
For you our baths float cool and clear, our air
Is redolent with garland wreaths, and rich
Within our royal citadel is crown'd
For you the banquet; welcome once again,
Mighty to save, and potent to defend!"——
A faint acclaim, a feeble sullen din
Ensued, with less of gladness than fierce grief,
And wrath ill stifled. Seeming all unmoved,
Elate the Monarch onward led the way;
Slow follow'd Saxon Hengist's martial train,

Clashing their armour loud, as though to daunt
All Britain with the clamour. Th' island Chiefs
Behind them march'd; and save some restless hands
Were busy with their sheathed swords, they mov'd
Silent, and cold, and gloomy, as a range
Of mountain pines, when cloudy lowers the storm.

Upon the azure bosom of the Thames
Reclining with its ponderous mass of shade,
Arose the royal Citadel, the work
Of the great Cæsar.* He the Lord of Rome,
Of Rome, earth's mistress; yet 'gainst savage foes
Vantage of trench and tower and massy wall
Scorn'd not; so swift, so perilous, so fierce
Cassivelan† his painted charioteers
Whirl'd to the frantic onset, standing forth
Portent of freedom mid a world enslav'd.

They pass'd the portal arch; the sumptuous hall
Flung back its gates; around the banquet board
Rang'd Prince and Chieftain, where luxurious art
Shower'd prodigal her dainties; poisons sweet;
And baleful splendour! Fierce the Saxon gaz'd
On goblet, and huge charger carv'd in gold,

---

* The foundation of the Tower of London, by Cæsar—

"Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame."—GRAY.

Holinshed, quoting Hector Boece, says, Now when he (Vortigern) with treason, fraud, and great deceit, at length obtained that for which he had long looked, he first of all furnished the Tower of London with a strong garrison of men of warre.—Book v. c. 2.

† Cassivelaunus, the King of Britain, opposed to Julius Cæsar.

Contemptuous wonder. But the monarch's brow
Grew lighter, as with greedy joy he quaff'd
Oblivious bliss; thus still the guilty soul
Wooes frenzy, and, voluptuous from despair,
Forgets itself to pleasure. High aloof,
Each in his azure robe, the band of Bards
Mingled the wanton luxuries of sound;
Gentle melodious languor, melting fall,
With faint effeminate flattery beguil'd
The soul of manhood. Silent veil'd his harp
White-haired Aneurin, and indignant tears
Stood in the old man's eye, for wrathful shame
To hear his godlike and heaven-breathing art
Pampering loose revels with obsequious chime.
Then rose the glorious madness; forth he sprung,
And with one stroke along the clashing chords
Won silence deep as of a summer eve
After a noontide storm; his silver locks
Wav'd proud, the kindling frenzy of his eye
Flash'd triumph, as the song of Chariots rose.
The song that o'er the van of battle shower'd
Pale horror, when that scourg'd Icenian Queen
Through the square legions drove her car; were heard
Her brazen wheels to madden, the keen scythes
Gride through their iron harvest; then rush'd route,
Wail'd havoc, while Bonduca * fiercer urg'd

* Boadicea, in Fletcher's play she is called Bonduca.

The trampling steeds; behind her silence sank
Along the dreary path of her revenge.
Ceas'd the bold strain, then deep the Saxon drain'd
The ruddy cup, and savage joy uncouth
Lit his blue gleaming eyes: nor sate unmov'd
The Briton Chiefs; fierce thoughts began to rise
Of ancient wars, and high ancestral fame.
Sudden came floating through the hall an air
So strangely sweet, the o'erwrought sense scarce felt
Its rich excess of pleasure; softer sounds
Melt never on the enchanted midnight cool,
By haunted spring, where elfin dancers trace
Green circlets on the moonlight dews; nor lull
Becalmed mariner from rocks, where basks
At summer noon the Sea-maid; he his oar
Breathless suspends, and motionless his bark
Sleeps on the sleeping waters. Now the notes
So gently died away, the silence seem'd
Melodious; merry now and light and blithe
They danced on air. Anon came tripping forth
In frolic grace a maiden troop, their locks [zones
Flower-wreath'd, their snowy robes from their clasp'd
Fell careless drooping; quick their glittering feet
Glanc'd o'er the pavement. Then the pomp of sound
Swell'd up, and mounted; as the stately swan,
Her milk-white neck embower'd in arching spray,
Queens it along the waters, up the hall
Advanced a shape, so wondrous fair, she lull'd

The music into silence, yet herself
Prolong'd th' undying sense of sweetest sounds.
Her grace of motion and of look, the smooth
And swimming majesty of step and tread,
The symmetry of form and feature, set
The soul afloat, even like delicious airs
Of flute or harp: as though she trod from earth,
And round her wore an emanating cloud
Of harmony, the Lady mov'd. Too proud
For less than absolute command, too soft
For aught but gentle amorous thought: her hair
Cluster'd, as 'twere an orb of gold, cast out
A dazzling and o'erpowering radiance, save
Here and there on her snowy neck repos'd
In milder brilliance some thin wandering tress.
The azure of her flashing eye was fring'd
With virgin meekness, and her tread, that seem'd
Earth to disdain, as softly fell on it
As the light dew-shower on a tuft of flowers.
The soul within seem'd feasting on high thoughts,
That to the outward form and feature gave
A loveliness of scorn. Her harbingers,
As she advanced, fell back, their modest eyes
Downcast, and drooping low their slender necks
In graceful reverence: she, by wond'ring gaze
Unmoved, and stifled murmurs of applause,
Nor yet unconscious, slowly won her way
To where the King, amid the festal pomp,

Sate loftiest; as she rais'd a fair-chas'd cup,*
Something of sweet confusion overspread
Her features; something tremulous broke in
On her half-failing accents, as she said,
"Health to the King!"—the sparkling wine laugh'd up,
As eager 'twere to touch so fair a lip.
A moment, and the apparition bright
Had parted; as before, the sound of harps
Was wantoning about the festive hall.
As one just waking from a blissful dream
Nor moves, nor breathes, lest breath or motion break

---

* A great supper therefore was prepared by Hengist, at the which it pleased the king to be present, and appointed his daughter, when everie man began to be somewhat merrie with drinke, to bring in a cup of gold full of good and pleasant wine, and to present it to the king, saieng, Wassail. Which she did in such comely and decent manner, as she that knew how to doo it well inough. So as the king marvelled greatlie thereat, and not understanding what she meant by that salutation, demanded what it signified. To whom it was answered by Hengist, that she wished him well, and the meaning of it was, that he should drink affter her, thereto forming this answer, Drinke, laile. Whereupon the king, as he was informed, tooke the cup at the damsels hand and drunke.

Finallie this young ladie behaved herself with such pleasant words, comelie countenance, and amiable grace, that the king beheld her so long, till he felt himself so farre in love with her person, that he burned in continuall desire to enjoy the same; insomuch, that shortlie after he forsooke his own wife, by whom he had three sones, Vortimerus, Catagrinus, and Pascentius, and required of Hengist to have his daughter, the said Rowen or Rowena in marriage * * * * * and so the marriage was concluded and solemnised; all Kent being assigned unto Hengist in reward, the which countrie was before that governed by one Guorongus (though not with most equall justice), which Guorongus was subject unto Vortigern, as all other the potentats of the Ile were.—Holinshed, b. v. c. 3.

The soft enchantment, that hath all entranc'd
His fancy, sate King Vortigern. "Whence came,
And whither went, she? of what race and stem
Sprang this bright wonder of our earth, that leaves
The rapture of her presence in our hall,
Though parted thence too swiftly?"—"King (replied
Erle Hengist)—in our ancient Saxon faith,
Ill bodes the joyless feast, where maiden's lips
Pledge not the wassail goblet."—"By my soul,"
Cried Vortigern, "a gallant faith! and I
Discredit not such omen sweet; the health
Those smooth lips wish'd me, well those lips might give,
A fragrance and a sparkling have they left
Even on the wine they touch'd." He said, and press'd
The goblet to his own. "A father's ear,
King Vortigern, must love the flattering tongue
That descants thus upon his daughter's praise."—
"Thy daughter? Saxon!"—"Mine, though vaunt not I
Her beauty, many a German Erle and King
Hath vow'd at his life's peril to proclaim
Her far surpassing comeliness."—None heard
The secret converse that ensued. Anon
Rose Vortigern, and from his brow transferred
A coronet of radiant Eastern gems
To the white hair of Hengist, and drank off
A brimming cup, and cried, "To Kent's high King,
A health, a health to Vortigern's fair bride,
The golden-hair'd Rowena."—All at once

Each Saxon seiz'd the exulting strain, and struck
The wine-drain'd goblet down, "Health, King of Kent!"
As mid the fabled Libyan bridal stood
Perseus, in stern tranquillity of wrath,
Half stood, half floated on his ankle plumes
Out-swelling, while the bright face on his shield
Look'd into stone the raging fray; * so rose,
But with no magic arms, wearing alone
Th' appalling and control of his firm look,
The solemn indignation of his brow,
The Briton Samor; at his rising, awe
Went forth, and all the riotous hall was mute;
But like unruffled summer waters flow'd
His speech, and courtly reverence smooth'd its tone.
"Sovereign of Britain's Sovereigns! † of our crowns
The highest! in our realm of many thrones
Enthron'd the loftiest! mighty as thou art,
Thou dost outstep thy amplitude of sway;
Thine is our isle to govern: not to give.
A free and sacred property hast thou
In our allegiance; but a master's right

* Ovid. Metamorphos. lib. iv.—I do not believe that I had seen even a cast of Canova's statue when this was written; but it perhaps resembles the statue more than the passage of Ovid, on which it was grounded, rather than imitated.

† The political state of Britain at this period, after the final retirement of the Roman forces, is not very clearly known. "At length the connexion between Britain and Rome was entirely severed. Britain broke, as it were, into various independent and rival communities."—*Palgrave's History of England*, p. 29.

Over our lives, our princedoms, and our souls—
King Vortigern, as well mayst thou presume
To a dominion o'er our winds, to set
Thy stamp and impress on our light from heaven.
This Britain cannot rest beneath the shade
Of Saxon empire, this our Christian soil
The harvest of obedience will not bear
To Heathen sway; and hear me, Vortigern,
The golden image that thou settest up,
Like the pride-drunken Babylonian king,
Though dulcimer and psaltery soothe us down
To shameful patience, and submission tame,
We will not worship."—From the hall he pass'd
Thus saying. Him the Island's brave and proud
Follow'd, the high and fame-enamour'd souls,
Never to Britain wanting, though in hours
Loosest of revels soft, and wanton ease.
But Vortigern, more largely pouring in
The vine's delicious poison, sate, and cried,
"Whom the flax binds not, must the iron gyve,
Whom sceptres daunt not, must the sword control."
Evening fell gentle, and the brilliant sun
Was going down into the waveless Thames,
As bearing light and warmth to his cold Nymphs
Within their crystal chambers, when the King
Left the hall of banquet. Lofty and alone,
Even as the Pillar great Alcides set,
The limit of the world and his renown,

On Calpe, round whose shaft the daylight left
Its last empurpling; on the battlements
Stood Samor, in the amethystine light,
And "Sink in darkness, thou majestic orb!
To-morrow shall the nations bask again
In thy full glory."—Thus he said, and turn'd
To where the King went hurrying by.—"And thou,
Thou to thy setting hastest, never more
Thy lost benighted splendour to renew;
Late at thy noon of pride, now fall'n, declin'd
For ever from thy fair meridian, go
Into thy cloudy rest!"—The solemn tone
Of his deep voice seiz'd on the King, as frosts
Arrest the rapid flowing stream.—"What means
The Sovereign of the Vales*, even in my halls,
And on my castle battlements, to cast
Bold scorn on Britain's King? Ingrate and blind,
When I the valiant Saxon have brought in
To check the Caledonian, through your isle
Marching amid the light of burning towns;
Ye, wedded to your sorrow and your shame,
Mock at the safety my free love provides."—
"Ah, provident! ah, sage! ah, generous King!
That sets the ravening wolf to dog the flock;
The hawk to guard the dovecote."—"Wisest chief,
I thank thee for thy phrase: doves are ye, doves

* I imagined Samor the king of the Dobuni, the inhabitants of the beautiful Gloucestershire valleys.

That fly with piteous and imploring speed
Before the Scottish kites, that swoop your nests,
And flesh their greedy talons in your young."—
"Monarch! the eaglet, were it smoothly nurst
In the dove's downy nest, at its first flight
Would shrink down dazzled from the morning sun;
But with strong plumes refresh'd, anon 'twould claim
Its old aspiring birthright, and unblench'd
Bathe in the splendour of his noontide fire.
Oh, we have slumber'd on soft luxury's lap
To her loose tabret; but, misjudging King!
Britain is like her soil; above, the turf
Lies velvet smooth, hard iron lurks beneath.
I know the northern Pagans waste our land;
And the tame mission to the Roman sent
I know, 'The fierce Barbarian to the sea
Drives us, the sea to the Barbarian back
Merciless': so ran the plaintive legend.* True!
But soldiers would it cast us back; despair
Hath its own valour; war makes warriors. King!
Calamities are on us, evil days
O'er our isle darken, but the noble wear
Disaster, as an Angel wears his wings,
To elevate and glorify. Nor us
Alone the enveloping gloom o'ershrouds, the frame
And fabric of our world is breaking up.

* See the Letter, taken from Gildas, in Hume.

Rome's dome of empire, that o'ervaulted earth
With its capacious shadow, rent and split,
Disorders the smooth course of human things,
Leaving confusion lord of this wide ball,
While to and fro the Nations roll and plunge
Like a tempestuous sea. Oh, mid such wreck,
T' uphold our free and independent land,
On every side 'gainst gathering foes to rear
A rampire of hard steel, or firmer far,
The bulwark of a high undaunted spirit,
From her thron'd Sovereign to her humblest sons,
This were a theme for Heaven's immortal harps.
So He whose sceptre glitters in thy grasp,
He the Deliverer, the Defender nam'd,
So Constantine had done, had the high Soul's bane,
Ambition, never madden'd him t' usurp
The purple, madly worn, yet nobly lost
On the sad plain by Arles." *—" I knew full well
'Twould come to this, that Constantine would end
The high-wrought orat'ry.† This too I know,

* See the Preface.

† I am amused at finding in Sir F. Palgrave's History a sort of resemblance to traditions which I picked up, I scarcely know where, in our old writers:—"As far as we can judge, two great parties prevailed in the southern tracts of our island. A Roman party, headed by Aurelius Ambrosius, a chieftain of imperial descent, who claimed or acquired the imperial dignity; and another, supporting the cause of the too famous Vortigern."—Page 29. I did not expect to find myself so near to authentic history. On the other hand my friend, Sir Francis, seems inclined to resolve into poetry much of that which my authorities, the old chroniclers,

And this I tell thee, Samor! nor yet add
Rebel! thy secret commerce with his sons,
To undermine my rightful throne; the right,
So babble ye in your licentious phrase,
Conferr'd by our assembled British Kings
On Constantine for ever and his heirs."—
"Alas! how better were it to know nought,
Than, like kings, darkly. Constantine's brave sons
And Samor oft have met, have met to mourn
The peril of their native land, to swear
Before the altar of the eternal God,
Never, amid these rude and dangerous times,
To blow the trump of civil strife, but prop
With their allegiance Britain's throne, though fill'd
By one they deem usurping. Vortigern!
I touch the string that jars thy inmost soul,
And it must vibrate to its highest pitch.
Oh what a royal madness, that might build

---

relate as grave history. Of the whole story of Vortigern and Rowena, of Hengist and Horsa, he thus writes, as a disciple of Niebuhr's historical school:—"I conceive (these details) bear no nearer relation to the real history of Anglo-Saxon England, than the story of Æneas, as related by Virgil, does to the real history of the foundation of Rome. * * We may seek for the groundwork of the narrative in the historical ballads of the Anglo-Saxons, in which their early enterprises were commemorated. And even the names of Hengist and Horsa seem only to be epithets derived from their standard, the snow-white Steed, which still appears as the ensign of Kent, in England, as it anciently did in the shield of the 'Old Saxons,' in Germany." Yet, with due deference to our learned antiquarian, are not most of these British, rather than Anglo-Saxon, traditions?

Upon the strong rock of a people's love,
Yet chooses the loose quicksand of distrust.
Oh monarch! thou dost fear thy subjects arm'd,
Fear, lest the old valour in their hearts revive,
And therefore fight'st their wars with foreign steel.
And is this he, the noble and the wise,
The Vortigern, that Britain on the plain
Of Arles, that fatal plain, hail'd Captain, King?
Arise, be King, be Captain, be thyself!
And we will stand around thy throne, and mock
The wide-spread ruin of the times."—"Away!
My royal word is to the Saxon given."—
"Oh, Vortigern! this knee hath never bow'd,
Save to the King of Kings, thus low on earth
I sue thee, cast the Saxon off."—At once
The swift contagious grandeur set on fire
The Monarch—"I am thine, am Britain's all:
Now by my throne, thus, thus I have not felt,
Since first this golden circle girt my brow,
So free, so upright, and so kingly; chains
Fall from me, mists are curling off my soul."
Like two bold Venturers, silently they stand,
Launching amid the sun-light their rich bark
O'er glassy waters to the summer airs:
Their solemn pondering hath the lofty look
Of vaunting, over each high brow flames out
A noble rivalry of hope and pride.
Even at that instant, smoothly sliding came

A car, in which, like some fair idol, led
Through the mute tumult of adoring streets,
Bright-hair'd Rowena pass'd the portal arch.
Have ye a sense, ye gales, a conscious joy,
In beauty, that with such an artful touch
And light ye float about her garment folds,
Displaying what is exquisite display'd,
And thinly scattering the light veil where'er
It may enhance the grace, that thus ye love
To lose yourselves about her, and expire
Upon her shape, or snow-white robes? She stood,
Her ivory arm in a soft curve stretch'd out,
As only in the obedience of her steeds
Rejoicing; they their necks arch'd proud and high,
And by her delicate and flower-soft hands
Sway'd, as enamour'd of her mastery, mov'd.
But as the Monarch she beheld, she caught
The slack rein up, and with unconscious check
Delay'd the willing coursers; and her head,
Upon her snowy shoulder half declin'd
In languor of enjoyment, rising wore
Rosy confusion; and her stately pride
A moment sank to sweet embarrassment.
Haughty to all the world, save him alone,
She seem'd, and almost trembled as she gaz'd.
Alone she came, alone she went not on.

BOOK II.

ARGUMENT.

Meeting of British kings in an ancient grove Emrys (Aurelius Ambrosius). Uther Pendragon. Samor. Caswallon, King of the Mountains (Cumberland). Malwyn, his son. Close of the Council. Samor. Elidure. Bridal Procession of Vortigern and Rowena. Prophecy of Merlin. Constans the Monk, the elder of the sons of Constantine, declines the Throne.

Noon is ablaze in Heaven; but gloom, the gloom
Of the brown forest's massy vault of shade,
Is o'er the Kings of Britain; the broad oaks,
As in protection of that conclave proud,
Like some old temple's dome, august and huge
Meet overhead, their rugged trunks around
Shew like fantastic pillars closely set
By Druids in mysterious circle, wont
Here, when the earth abroad was bright and clear
With moonshine, to perform their midnight rites
By blue nor earthly kindled fires, while Bards
Pour'd more than music from their charmed harps.
Each on his mossy seat, in arms that cast

A glimmer which is scarcely light, they sit
Colossal, stern, and still; on every brow
Indignant sorrow and sad vengeance lower.
Them had the Pagan peasant deemed his Gods,
In cloudy wrath down stooping from the heavens
To blast the mighty of mankind, and wreak
On some old empire ruin and revenge.
And first majestical, yet mild, arose
A lofty shape, nor less than monarch seem'd,
Whose royal look from souls bold, brave, and free,
Not stooping slavery claim'd, but upright awe
And noble homage; yet uncrown'd he wore
Dominion. Him with stately reverence heard
That armed Senate. "Princes of the land,
Lords of the old hereditary thrones
Of Britain, we, the sons of Constantine,
Emrys and Uther, come not here to charge
Inconstant counsel on your wisdom, nought
Arraigning, that the sceptre to our line
Solemnly given, in those disastrous days,
When for the Empire of the Occident,
For Gaul o'er-master'd, and submitted Spain,
Warr'd Constantine, and warring nobly fell,
Ye placed in elder hand; our right foregone
For the more precious public weal. Oh Chiefs,
'Twas well and wisely done; a stripling's arm
May rear the kingly standard in its pomp
To play with Zephyrs under cloudless skies;

But when the rude storm shakes its ponderous folds
'Twere hard for less than the consummate man
Aloft to bear it, and unstooping. Well
Stemm'd your new standard bearer Vortigern
The o'ershadowing tempest, well his brow became
Your crown's old glories; till, alas! dire change!
Dread fall! the sceptre that ye fondly hoped
Would blossom, like the Hebrew Hierarch's rod,
With the almond bloom of mercy and of love,
More like the Egyptian magic-worker's wand
Became a serpent, blasting all your peace
With its infection. Then your virtues wrought
Your sorrows, from your valour grew your shame.
Your borders were o'erleap'd, your towns on fire,
And the land groan'd beneath fierce Rapine's wheels.
Ye cried unto your king for arms; but he
In cold and jealous wisdom fear'd to arm,
Whose arms might brave himself, and cast control
On the fierce wanderings of his despot will.
Then Saxons fought our wars, our hard-wrung gold
Bought us ignoble safety, till the slaves
Swell'd into Lords, and realms must pamper up
Our hirelings into Princes; Kent, fair Kent,
The frontlet of our isle, where yet are seen
The graves great Cæsar peopled with his dead,
When on his rear the Briton conqueror hung;
Where first the Banner of the Cross was wav'd,
Sinks to a Heathen province. Warriors! Kings!

This must not be among baptized men,
This cannot be 'mong Britons. Therefore here,
Here in your presence dare we call again,
Your throne our throne, and challenge in your love
A Sovereign's title. By our youth we fell
From that great height, but Vortigern hath fall'n
By his own guilt: we therefore rise again
In majesty renew'd; he falls, no more
To occupy the sacred royal seat."
Thereat with concord loud, and stern acclaim,
Gave answer that proud Senate, and denounc'd
Judgment irrevocable. But with mien
Somewhat appall'd, as one in high debate
And solemn council unassay'd, arose
Prince Uther: ere he spake, his clanging mail
Fiercely he smote, mute audience to enchain,
Then at the battle sound enkindling, high
His haughty brow and crested helm he raised,
And rude his fiery eloquence pour'd forth.

"Warriors of Britain! me nor pomp of words
Beseems, nor strife of smooth and liquid phrase,
In the debate of swords, the fray of steeds
No combatant unskill'd. I will not boast
That I have brook'd with Emrys' patient pride
A sceptre's loss: a boy, I wept to hear
My father's crown was on a stranger's brow.
But when my arm could grasp a sword, those tears,
Those soft unseemly waters, turn'd to drops

Of burning indignation. At his height
And plenitude of power I yearned to rise
Against th' enthroned Usurper—now, oh Kings!
Thus charter'd, thus commission'd, thus array'd,
With what a noble frenzy will we rush,
And trample down Saxon and Vortigern.
Our path shall be as rapid and as bright
As summer meteor, more pernicious; that
Waning into the dull unkindling air,
We burning, desolating as we pass.
Rise, Britons, rise, a tyrant fills your throne!
Nor fitter monument may tyrant find
Than his throne's ruins; let the flat earth close
O'er both at once. The stranger Saxon lords
Within our island, let the seas which bore
Here his storm-braving navy, bear him back
Weltering and tossing in their drowning surge."
Low'ring he stood, still in fierce act of speech,
Yet speechless. Sudden, then, in dread uproar
Rose shout of war, with thundering clash of arms
Mingled; then hurrying spears and nodding helms
With glittering tumult in the pale gloom flash'd;
War, war each voice, each stricken shield denounc'd.
Amid the multitudinous din arose
Solemnly the Bright City's Lord. Down sank
Instant all tumult; broke abruptly off
Fierce voice and clash of arms; so mute and deep
Settled the silence, the low sound was heard

Of distant waterfall, the acorn drop
From the green arch above. Still and abash'd
Sate the fierce conclave, while with mild reproof
Winning all hearts, the gracious Chieftain spake.
" Brave sight for earth and heaven! it doth not fail
A nation's cry for freedom and for faith,
Nor faint, nor deaden in the mist and gloom
Of this low earth; it takes the morning's wings,
Passes the crystal skies, and beats heaven's gate;
There glides it through rejoicing Angel choirs,
That fan it onward with their favouring plumes,
To the eternal sapphire throne, and him
That sits thereon, Ineffable. Oh Kings,
Our council, thus appealing, may not speak
The voice of earthly passion, lust of sway,
Or hasty vengeance: we must rise in wrath,
But wear it as a mourner's robe of grief,
Not as a garb of joy: must boldly strike,
But like the Roman, with reverted face,
In sorrow to be forced to such dire deed.
It would mis-seem a Briton, noble Chiefs!
To trample on the fallen, though a King;
It would mis-seem a Christian to rejoice
Where virtue hath play'd false, and fame's pure ligh
Hath sicken'd to dishonourable gloom.
Vortigern is our foe, no more our King,
Yet King he hath been, King he had been still,
Had never his high vaulting pride disdain'd

The smooth dominion of old use, nor striven
To fix on our impatient necks the yoke
Of foreign usurpation; our free land
Will not endure the heathen Saxons rule,
Nor him that rules by heathen Saxon power.
So march we forth in th' armour of our right,
From our once King not falling off in hate
Or fickleness, but by severe constraint
Of duty to ourselves and to our God.
So march we forth, in state that well may make
Our mother country proud of us: raise up,
Side by side, winning the fair airs of heaven
To an approval of our upright deed,
Our royal banner and the Cross of Christ;
And move beneath their holy shadow, calm,
And yet resistless, as the bright-man'd steeds
That bear the Morn to disenthrone old Night.
" And now our kingly sceptre, forced aside,
By stress and pressure of disorder'd times,
Devious into an alien hand, reverts
To the old line; the heir of Constantine,
Constans, as elder than this noble pair,
Stands foremost on succession's golden roll.
Nor know not I his gentle soul more apt,
To listen to the peaceful vesper hymn,
Than danger's spirit-stirring trump, yet deem,
Thus once forewarn'd, 'tis dangerous to divert
The stream of royal blood, that broken, pours

Waters of bitterness and civil strife
O'er th' harass'd land, and therefore thus I hail
Constans the King of Britain. Speak I well?
I pause, and wait, oh Chiefs, your high award."
He ceased, nor time for voice or swift acclaim,
With a short sullen laugh of scorn, leaped up
The mountain King, the Sovereign of the lakes
And dales this side the Caledonian bound;
He only, when the Kings sate awe-struck, stood
Elate with mocking pity in his frown;
A mighty savage, he of God and man
Alike contemptuous: nought of Christian lore
Knew he, yet scoff'd unknown, 'twas peaceful, meek,
Thence worthless knowledge. Him delighted more
Helvellyn's cloud-wrapt brow to climb, and share
The eagle's stormy solitude; 'mid wreck
Of whirlwinds and dire lightnings, huge he stood,
Where his own Gods he deem'd on volleying clouds
Abroad were riding, and black hurricane.
Them in their misty pride assail'd he oft
With impious threat, and laugh'd when th' echoing glens
His wild defiance cast unanswered back.
Now with curl'd lip of scorn, and lofty brow,
Lordly command, not counsel, thus he spake.
—"Shame, coward shame! as though the fowls of heaven,
When in dusk majesty and pride of wing
Sails forth the monarch eagle, down should stoop
In homage to the daw. Oh craven souls,

When Snowdon or high Skiddaw's brow is bare,
To plant the stately standard of revolt
Upon a molehill. Constans! that to him
Caswallon should bow down; aloft our crown
Upon the giddy banner staff, that rocks
On Troynovant's tall citadel, uphang,
And who the dizzy glory will rend down,
Or Constans or Caswallon? The bright throne
Environ with grim ranks of steel-girt men:
Huge Saxons black with grisly scars of war,
Who first will hew to that triumphal seat
His bloody path? Hear, sceptred Britons, hear,
A counsel worthy the deep thoughts of kings.
Of valorous achievement and bold deeds
Be guerdon to the mightiest of our Isle,
The Sov'reignty of Britain; spurn my voice,
And I renounce your councils, cast you off,
And with my hardy vassals of the north
I join the Saxon."—Then fierce sounds again
Broke out, wan flames of brandish'd armour flash'd.
In rude disorder and infuriate haste
Sprang every warrior from his seat: as clouds
Amid the sultry heaven, thunderous and vast,
Gather their blackening disarray to burst
Upon some mountain turret, so the Chiefs
Banded in fierce confusion to rush on,
And whelm in his insulting pride the foe.
He stood as one in joy, and lower'd a smile;

With wolf-skin robe flung back, broad shield outstretch'd,
And battle axe uplift: vaunting and huge
As fabled giant on embattled Heaven
Glaring not less than utter overthrow,
And total wreck. Forthwith a youth rush'd out,
His moony buckler high upheld to bar
The onset, and with voice, which youthful awe
Temper'd to tone less resolute, address'd
The haughty Chieftain. "Father, deem not thou
Malwyn confederate in thy lawless thought,
Mine is a Briton's soul, a Briton's sword,
But mortal man that seeks thy life, must pass
O'er Malwyn's corpse." Back Chief and King recoil'd,
In breathless admiration. Nobler pride,
And human joy almost to softness smooth'd
Caswallon's rugged brow. "Well hast thou said,
Son of Caswallon, worthy of thy sire!
On thine own track mount thou to fame, nor swerve
For man, or more than man."—Awhile the Kings
Brief parley held, then stately and severe
Rose Emrys, and pronounc'd their stern arrest.
"Caswallon of the Mountains, long our isle
Hath mark'd thy wavering mood, now friend, now foe;
Now in the Caledonian inroad prompt
To bear thy share in rapine, foremost now
In our high councils. This we further say,
We scorn thy war, Caswallon, hate thy peace,
And deem it of our mercy that, unscath'd,

We banish thee our presence." Nor reply
Caswallon deign'd; calm strode he as in scorn
Of wrath 'gainst foes so lowly. Far was heard
His tread along the rocky path, the crash
Of branches rent by his unstooping helm.
They in blank wonder sate, nor wholly quell'd
Wrath and insulted majesty, with look
As he were still in presence fix'd and stern.
Then Emrys, "It demands no trivial toil
To shape the rude trunk of our enterprise
To full perfection; each must have his charge
In this great enterprise. Be, Samor, thine
To bear our brother Constans Britain's crown,
In name of our assembled Kings. Be mine
From the Armoric shore, King Hoel's realm,
(Our father's brother, Hoel) to embark
The succours of his high-fam'd Chivalry.
Thou, Uther, to the West; each other King
Unto his own, at signal of revolt
To lead his armed Vassalage abroad."
So saying, each departed; fell again
The ancient silence on the solemn place.
Together from the forest pass'd the friends,
Samor and Elidure; downward their way
Went wandering on through flowery meads, or sank
Beneath green arches dim of beechen shade.
Around the golden hills in summer wealth
Bask'd in the sunshine; on a river bank

Long gleaming down its woodland course, repos'd
Many a white hamlet: even fierce shrines of war
Wore aspect mild of peace; towers dark of yore
And rugged in the Roman war array,
With wanton ivy and grey moss o'ergrown,
Their green crowns lifted to the azure heavens.
"Oh grief! o'er yon fair meads and smiling lawns
Must steeds of carnage batten, men of blood
Their fell magnificence of murtherous pomp
Pavilion in yon placid groves of peace.
The brutal savages of wood and air,
In meet abodes of wilderness and woe,
Shroud their blood-thirsty revels; the gaunt wolf
Prowls gloomy o'er the wintry blasted heath;
Brood desolate on some bare mountain peak
Raven and screaming vulture. Man, fell man,
Envious of bliss he scorns, 'mid haunts of peace,
The fairest, the most blissful spots of earth,
Plays ever his foul game of spoil and death,
Ruthless; then vaunts himself Creation's pride,
Supreme o'er all in deeds of blood alone."
Thus Elidure; but Samor, from deep trance
Wakening, replied: "Soft man of peace, my prayer
Would ask of heaven no theatre of strife
Save yon fair plain, there forth the weak would start
In the resistless valour of despair,
The timorous proudly tower in scorn of death:
There, where each tree, each dell, each grassy knoll,

Lovely from memory of some past delight,
Is kindred to the soul; his house of prayer,
The altar of his bridal vow, the font,
Of his sweet infants' baptism, kindred all,
Holiest and last, his fathers' peaceful graves:
Oh, were all Britain, like yon beauteous plain,
Blissful and free, that angels there might walk
Forgetful of their heavenly bowers of light,
Friend of my boyhood, these all-conquering foes,
Who fetter the free winds, and ride the sea
Kinglike, their menacing prows would turn aloof,
And bitterly, in baffled lust of prey,
Curse the proud happiness that mock'd their might."
Lo, ere they paus'd, gay files of dazzling light
Slow o'er the plain advancing, the long blaze
Broke gradual into form; lance, bow, and helm,
Standard and streamer, chariot and tall steed,
Start from the mingled splendour. On their height
Unseen, the Chieftains watch'd the winding pomp.
And all before the azure-vested Bards
From glancing instruments struck bridal glee.
Then came the gorgeous chariots, rough with gold,
And steeds their proud heads nodding with rich weight
Of frontlet wreathed with flowers and shadowy plumes;
Therein sate ladies robed in costly state,
Each like a Queen; the noble charioteers,
Briton in garb, with purple mantle loose,
O'er steel, in network bright, or scale o'er scale

Glittering, and aventayle barr'd close and firm,
As though the gaudy traitors shamed to meet
The piercing glance of countrymen betray'd.
Dark in their iron arms, some wildly girt
With Caledonian spoils, their yellow hair
Down from the casque in broad luxuriant flow
Spreading, and lofty banner wide display'd,
Whereon a milk-white courser reinless shone,
Wound forth the Saxon warriors. High o'er all,
Tempestuous Horsa, chafing his hot steed,
And Hengist with his wreath of amber beads,*
His hoary strength, in spite of age or toil,
A tower of might. But with a tall grove of spears,
Circled, and rampart close of serried shields,
The bridegroom Monarch rode; his bright attire
Peaceful, as fitting nuptial pomp; his robe
Rich-floating strew'd the earth with purple shade;
And on his lofty brow a regal crown,
Bright as a wreath of sunbeams; high his arm
The ivory sceptre bore of kingly sway:
Yet who his mien and bearing watch'd, had seen
Dim gleams of jealous steel, or lurking mail
Beneath those glorious trappings, for his look,
Now jocund, chang'd anon to restless gaze,
Fearful and wild, as though the air were rife

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* He is so decorated by the Welsh Poets. See Translation of the Brut of Tysilio, by Peter Roberts.

With deadly vengeful javelins ; his pace
Hurried, yet tardy, as of one who rides
O'er land still tottering with an earthquake shock.
And him beside, on snowy palfrey, deck'd
With silver bells its pendant mane profuse,
Of silver and of stainless ermelin
The bright caparisons, and all her robes
White as of woven lily cups, the Bride
Majestic rode as on a moving throne.
Her sunbright hair she wav'd, and smil'd around,
As though, of less than kingly Paramour
Scornful, she said, Lo, Britain, through your land
I lead the enthralled sovereign of your isle.
Yet so surpassing fair, one instant wish'd
Those wrathful Briton Chiefs their leafy screen
A thin transparent cloud : of his high charge
Awhile forgetful, Samor stood entranced,
Fearing her form should fleet too swift away.
Came it from earth or air, yon savage shape,
His garb, if garb it be, of shaggy hair
Close folding o'er his dusky limbs ; his locks
And waving matted beard like cypress boughs
On bleak heath swaying to the midnight storm ? *
Came he from yon deep wood ? On the light spray
No leaf is stirring. On the winged winds

* I took this from Mr. Ellis's abstract of the Metrical Romance of Merlin. The reader, if he is curious in such matters, may find how Merlin happened to be born in this state, in "Ellis's Metrical Romances," vol. i. p. 223.

Rode he? No breeze awakes the noontide air.
Mid that arm'd throng, dismaying, undismay'd,
With a strange eye dilated, as unus'd
To common sights of earth, and voice that seem'd
Rarely to hold discourse with human ears,
"Joy," and again, and thrice he utter'd "Joy."
Cower'd Horsa on his palsied steed; aghast
As toiling to despise the thing he fear'd,
Sate Hengist. "Joy to Bridegroom and to Bride!
Why should not man rejoice, and earth be glad?
Beyond the sphere of man, the round of earth,
There's loud rejoicing,—'tis not in the heavens!
And many ministrant Angels shake their wings
In gladness—wings that are not plum'd with light.
The dead are jocund—not the dead in bliss.
Your couch is blest—by all whose blessings blast,
All things unlovely gratulate your love.
I see the nuptial pomp, the nuptial song
I hear, and full the pomp, for Hate, and Fear,
Shame and Dishonour, Discontent and Grief,
And Infamy, and Servitude are there,
A blithesome troop, a gay and festive crew.
And the Land's curses are the bridal hymn;
Sweetly and shrilly doth th' accordant Isle
Imprecate the glad Hymenean song.
So joy again, I say, to Britain's King,
That takes unto his bosom Britain's fates,
Her beautiful destruction, to his bed.

And joy to Britain's Queen, who bears her Lord
So bright a dowry and profuse, long years
Of war and havoc, streams of kindred blood,
And widest ruin, loss of crown and fame,
And full perdition of the immortal soul;
So thrice again I utter 'joy,' joy,' 'joy!'"
Then upsprung lance to strike, and bicker'd bow;
Ere lance could strike, or shaft could fly, the path
Was bare and vacant; shape nor sound remain'd;
Only the voice of Vortigern moan'd out,
"Merlin;"—and on the long procession past.
Down in a quiet dale, where beechen groves
With interchanging gold and glossy green
O'ermantled the smooth slopes, that fell around
Like a fair amphitheatre: beneath,
A brook went wand'ring through fresh meadow banks,
With a cool summer dashing: here the Chiefs
The royal Hermit found. His gentle brow
Smooth as a slumbering Angel's plumes, e'en now
Effaced all traces of this lower earth,
Wore that calm holiness the sainted dead
Smile on the dreams of those they lov'd on earth:
His life was like a sleep, with heavenly sights,
And harmonies, as of seraphic sounds
Visited ever: nor his barren heart
Touch'd not the light affections, trembled not
His spirit with love's fervent swell; but all
Most wont to bear man's soul to earth, round his,

As the thin morning clouds around the lark,
Gather'd, to float it upward to the heavens.
They laying at his feet the kingly crown,
Fulfill'd their lofty mission. He, the while,
With that mild sadness he had watch'd the leaves
Drip from the sere autumnal bough, survey'd
Its stately glittering. "Men of earth, why mock,
With gaudy pageantry, and titled pomp,
The frail and transient pilgrims of this world?
The fading flag-flower on yon streamlet brink,
Were garland meeter for our mortal brows
Than yon rich blaze of gems."—"Prince," Samor spake,
"Sweet is it down the silent vale of life
To glide away, of all but Heaven forgot,
Forgetting all but Heaven. To king-born men,
Lords of mankind, Heaven's delegates, belongs
A loftier doom, their rare prerogative
The luxury of conferring bliss. Oh, Prince,
Not by the stream to slumber, not to waste
Idly in joyous dreams the drowsy hours,
Hath Heaven thy kingly heritage ordain'd.
God's noblest service is to serve mankind,
To save a nation all that man may do
To imitate the Lord who saved the world."
Calm answer'd Constans, "Earth's exalted fame,
Grandeurs and glories gleam upon my soul
Like wintry sun-light on a plain of snow.
With prayers, a Hermit's arms, I aid your cause,

Farewell. Why pause ye, as to question more
The wisdom of my choice? Lo, yon bright orb;
How spotless the pure azure where he holds
His noontide throne, nor knows his golden light
A stain of dimness, till th' abode of men
Infects it with its tainting mists."—"Oh, Prince,
'Tis not the glory of that peerless light,
The barren glittering, the unfruitful waste
Of splendour on the still inanimate skies,
It is the life, the motion, and the joy
It breathes along this world of man, the broad
Munificence of blessing that awakes,
And in its rapturous gratitude springs up
To glorify its bounteous source of pride."
"I see thy brow at thine own words on fire;
Mine, Samor, yet is calm and cold."—"Dost thou,
Constans, all title, claim, and right renounce
To Britain's throne?"—"Freely as I renounce
The everlasting enemy of man."—
"Will thy voice mingle with the general cry,
'Long live King Emrys?'"—"Long may Emrys live,
Even the eternal life beyond the grave."
"Yet one word more; 'tis perilous in the storm
For the tall pine, nor less, in evil days,
For the high born and exalted of the state.
The Saxon blood-hounds are abroad for prey,
Seek thou some quiet solitude remote
Beyond their prowling range."—His arm to Heaven

Slowly uplifted, " Will they reach me there?"
Spake the meek Hermit, " there is rest secure."
They parted; gentle Elidure alone,
Lingering, with somewhat of an envious gaze,
View'd the deep quiet of that placid dell.
That night were seen along the dusky wood,
Of more than human stature moving forms,
Pale faces circled with black iron helms;
Not of the Briton shape their garb or arms;
Stealthy their pace and slow; the peasants thought
Demons of evil that sad night had power,
And pray'd Heaven's grace to guard the saintly man.
At morn roved forth a shepherd, down the dale
His dog went bounding to the Hermit's cell,
For all mute creatures loved the man of God.
A quick and desolate moaning nearer call'd
The peasant; in officious grief the dog
Stood licking the cold hand that drooping hung
Lifeless; the mild composure of his brow
On the cross rested; praying he had died,
And his cold features yet were smiling prayer.

BOOK III.

ARGUMENT.

Departure of Hengist to collect new forces in Germany. Caswallon—He embarks with Hengist. The voyage. Sets forth with Hengist to consult the Oracle. The journey through regions of ice and snow. The Valkyrii. The Prophecy. The gathering of the German Adventurers at the command of Hengist. The Fleet. Arrival on the Shores of Britain. The preparation for the Sacrifice of the Maiden.

ORIENT the bright-hair'd Charioteer of heaven
Pour'd daylight from his opal wheels, and struck
From the blue pavement of the sky clear flakes
Of azure light upon the Eastern sea.
And as the grey mists slowly curl'd away,
Rose the white cliffs of Kent, like palace fair,
Or fane of snowy marble, to enshrine
Blue Amphitrite, or the Sea-Gods old
Of Pagan mariner. Rode tall below
The Saxon navy, as from midnight sleep
Wakening; the white sails in the breeze of morn
'Gan tremble, gleaming oars flash in the spray.
The Sea-Kings on the beach in parley stern

Were met, nor less than nation's doom and fate
Of kingdoms in their voice. Lo, in the midst
Stood huge Caswallon, word of mild salute
Deign'd not, but thus addrest the Ocean Lord,
" Saxon ! that o'er this fair and princely isle
Thou would'st win empire by the sword of war,
I marvel not, arraign not—'tis a dream,
Noble as o'er the heavens to walk abroad,
Companion of yon bright majestic sun.
Now by my glory, Saxon, mortal peer
Never Caswallon brook'd, save thee alone,
Thee, rival in his race of pride and power.
Arm'd with myself and all th' embattled North,
(No Roman Britons, sons of sires who dash'd
The purple Conquerors' haughty wall to earth,
And trampled their strewn ramparts; who ne'er deign'd
Barter for gaudy robe and marble pile
Fierce naked freedom, and wild mountain eave)
Will I, and thou with Saxon spears begirt,
Bow this fair Britain to our lordly sway.
Then will we two, from pale perplexed earth
Seen, like twin meteors battling in high heaven,
On some lone eminence wage glorious strife;
Sole empire meed of conquest, of defeat
Death honourable, unsubmitting death
The solace and the comfort." Bold he paus'd,
Nor Hengist with pale sign of awe or dread
Shamed the proud peerage, but with hardy speech

Guileful, won faith by seeming scorn of guile.
" Briton, to dare high deeds, and to disown,
Argues a wavering valour; the firm soul
Vaunts resolute its lofty dangerous scope.
To us our Gods o'er ocean and its shores
Kingly dominion and wide sway have given;
Were insult to our might and base reproach,
The freedom of one sea-girt isle. To thee
Honouring, not fearing, 'mid our prime we grant
Superior state, and eminence of power.
Now speed we of th' immortal Powers in Heaven,
Our high omniscient Fathers, to demand
If on the eternal shield of fate be graven
Ruin or Conquest, ere to bold emprize
We gird our brazen arms."—" Of mighty men
The gods are mighty, whom the Saxon fears,
The paramount of men, 'twere rash to scorn,
No calm and sunshine deities of peace."
So spake Caswallon, the mild faith of Christ
Scoffing with covert mockery; thus th' All Wise
The imaginations of the proud on earth
Silent endures, till some brief point of time
Crumbles the high-built insolence of years.
" Wilt thou behold our gods?" fierce Horsa cried.
" Then mount the bark, abroad her wings are spread,
And fleet along the obedient deep she speeds.
Fear not, proud Briton."—" Fear!" Caswallon cried;
All iron as he stood, o'er surf, surge, wave

He bounded, hollow rang his heavy arms,
The bark her tall side to the troubled waves
Stoop'd groaning, nor delay'd the Ocean King.
"Brother, farewell! not singly the bold wolf
Scatters the mountain herd; in grim repose
He rests expectant of his kindred troop,
Numberless from their shaggy dens they sweep,
And spacious o'er the antler'd monarch's realm
Spreads the wide ravage of their muster'd might."
Stern Horsa bow'd assent, yet paus'd to watch
The proud bark tilting o'er the azure plain.
Stately she rode her path of light, her sails
In dalliance with the courteous winds: bold Man!
Well may thy full heart bound: in earth and air
The thunder-maned steed, the eagle thron'd
In the pavilion of his plumes, stand forth
Creation's glories; but the noblest shape
That walks the deep, thy workmanship sublime
Owneth, and starts from thee to life. Boast thou,
Yet humbly boast, all greatness is from God.
What dolphin glancing in his silver sport,
So graceful with translucent pinion parts
The liquid azure? what Leviathan,
Huge heaving on the thick Norwegian foam,
So lordly as the white-wing'd bark, that wafts
The Sea King o'er his empire? the fair waves
Rise in their gamesome turbulence, and pay
Wild homage to that royal Mariner.

The motion and the murmur of the deep,
The rushing of the silent, solemn sky,
Each in its deep abyss and pure expanse,
Seeming its secret mysteries of might,
Its ruling soul of everlasting change,
To veil from mortal knowledge, ever pour,
Even o'er the rudest minds, a pleasing awe,
And th' agitation of a thrilling dread.
Rapt in vague notions of infinity,
And listening to eternal sights and sounds,
Inactive though the body, the free spirit
Ranges along the illimitable void,
'Mid perils strange and rich uncertainties,
In restless course; now gathering treasures rare,
That gem the caverns of the hoary deep,
Or bathes with sea-maids in their crystal bowers,
Or with gay creatures and fantastical
Peoples some dreamy land; such joys of old
Lured the fierce Saxon from his darksome woods,
To launch along the vast and barren sea.
Such joys through this long voyage, wean'd brief while
From thoughts of war and war-won empire wide,
Haughty Caswallon, or from him assum'd
Fierce aspect, and a martial character.
'Twas midnight, but a rich untimely dawn
Sheets the fir'd Arctic heaven; forth springs an arch,
O'erspanning with a crystal pathway pure
The starry sky; as though for Gods to march,

With show of heavenly warfare daunting earth,
To that wild revel of the northern clouds:
They now with broad and bannery light distinct
Stream in their restless wavings to and fro,
While the sea billows gleam them mellower back;
Anon like slender lances bright start up,
And clash and cross with hurtle and with flash,
Tilting their airy tournament. "Brave signs,"
Cried Hengist; "lo, our Gods their standards rear,
And with glad omen of immortal strife
Salute our high-wing'd purpose."—"Yea (return'd
Caswallon) from mine own Helvellyn's brow,
Never a brighter conflict in the skies
Taught me that war was dear in Heaven: dream ye
Of tamer faith in gentle Southern skies
Your smooth and basking deities! our North
Wooes not with tender hues and sunny smiles
Soft worship, but emblazons all the air
With semblance of celestial strife, unveils
To us of their empyreal halls the pomp,
The secret majesty of godlike war."
Oh Lord of Lords! incessant thus assail'd
That Pagan with his frantic railings Thee,
Th' Ineffable, yet worshipp'd of thy power
A faint and pale effect, reflection dim
From thy soul-blinding glories. On they sail'd,
Till o'er the dark deep now the wintry winds
Swept on their murky pinions; huge and high

The liquid legions of the main arose;
Like snow upon the sable pines, the foam
Hung hoary on their towered fronts; but slow,
Like a triumphant warrior, their bold bark
Wore onward, now upon the loftiest height
Shaking its streamers' gay defiance, now
With brave devotion to the prone abyss
Down plunging; but the sternest Saxon cheek
Put not to shame that dauntless Landsman; he
In the strong passion of a new delight
On the fierce tumult feasts, and almost grieves,
When now beneath the haven rocks embayed,
The angry waves seem wearying to repose,
And the slack sails slow droop their flagging folds.
  Their port was southward of that Strait, where bursts
The Baltic, with her massy waves of ice
Encumbering far and wide the Northern main.
  South, North, and East, the rapid heralds speed,
Summoning from fen or forest, moor or wild,
Britain! on thee to banquet, all who bathe
In Weser, Elbe, or Rhine, their saffron locks,
Hertog and Erle and King; the huntsman bold
Of bear, or bison, o'er the quaking moss,
Or grim Vikinger, who but sues his Gods
For tempests, so upon some wealthy coast
His midnight frigate unforeseen may burst,
And freight its greedy hold with amplest spoil.
  And now have Hengist and Caswallon climb'd

The chariot of the Oracle; no wheels
Bear that strange car; like wind along the sea,
It glides along the rapid rein-deer's track,
Beauteous those gentle rein-deer arch'd their necks,
And cast their palmy antlers back, and spread
Their broad red nostrils to the wind; they hear
Old Hengist's voice, like arrows down the gale,
Like shot-stars through the welkin, start they forth.
The car slides light, the deer bound fleet: they pass
Dark leagues of pine and fir, the filmy light,
Shivering with every motion of the wind,
On their brown path lies tremulous, o'er them sails,
Heard through the dismal foliage hissing shrill,
And hoarser groaning of the swaying boughs,
The funeral descant of the ominous birds.
Around them the prophetic milk white steeds,*
Their necks yet virgin of the taming curb,
With all their loose long glories, arch, and pass
In solemn silence, and regardless paw
The unechoing earth. But Hengist, resolute
With bolder hand inflexible, to draw
The veil of dusk futurity, disdains
These tamer omens. Still the car slides light,
The deer bound fleet; they pause not, save to quaff

* Proprium gentis, equorum quoque præsagia ac monitus experiri: publicè aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis. Candidi, et nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitusque ac fremitus observant. Tac. Germ.

The narrow cruise, to share their scanty store.
Like swallows o'er the glassy rivers smooth,
O'er the pellucid lake, with glittering breast
Yet wrinkled with its rippling waves, they skim,
The dead unstirring ocean bears them on;
Amid the immortal ice-hills wind they now.
In restless change God's softer summer works
Glitter and fade, are born and die; but these,
Endiadem'd by undissolving snows,
High Potentates of winter's drear domain,
Accumulate their everlasting bulk,
Eternal and imperishable; they
Amid Creation's swift inconstant round,
In majesty of silence undisturb'd,
Save when from their long-menacing brows they shake
The ruining Avalanche; unvisited
By motion, but of sailing clouds, when sleets
From their unwasting armoury barb their darts,
And the grim North-wind loads his rimy wings.
Nor trace of man, save many a fathom deep,
Haply dark signs of some tall people strange,
That walk'd the infant earth, may shroud profound
Their legends inaccessible. They soar
In precipice abrupt, or pyramid
Linking the earth and heaven; to which the piles
Where those Egyptian despots rot sublime,
Or even that frantic Babylonian tower,
Might veil inglorious their inferior heights.

Nor wants soft interchange of vale, where smiles
White mimicry of foliage and thin flower.
Feathery and fanlike spreads the leafy ice,
With dropping cup, and roving tendril loose,
As though the glassy dews o'er flower and herb
Their silken moisture had congeal'd; and yet
Within that slender veil their knots profuse
Blossom'd and blush'd with tender life: the couch
Less various where the fabled Zephyr fans
With his mild wings his Flora's bloomy locks;
But colourless and cold, these flowering vales
Seem meeter for decrepit Winter's head
To lie in numb repose. The car slides light,
The deer bound fleet; the long grey wilderness
Hath something of a roseate glimmering dim,
And widens still its pale expanse: when lo,
A light of azure, wavering to display
No sights, no shapes of darkness and of fear.
Tremblingly flash'd the inconstant meteor light,
Shewing thin forms, like virgins of this earth,
Save that all signs of human joy or grief,
The flush of passion, smile or tear had seem'd
On the fix'd brightness of each dazzling cheek,
Strange and unnatural; statues they might seem
By nature, in fantastic mood congeal'd
From purest snow, the fair of earth to shame,
Surpassing beauteous; breath of mortal life
Heaved not their bosoms, and no rosy blood

Tinged their full veins; yet moved they, and their steps
Were harmony. But three of that bright troop,
The loveliest and the wildest, stood aloof,
Enwrapt by what in human form were like
Impulse divine, but of their nature seem'd
The eternal instinct. Them no less survey'd
Caswallon with the knitted brow of scorn,
Bitter he spake—"No marvel Saxon souls
Revel in war's delights, so stern, so fierce
Their deities." Severe with wrath suppress,
As one ill-brooking that irreverent mirth
Scoff'd the dread lore, himself ne'er dar'd to doubt,
Answer'd the son of Woden. "These, proud Chief,
So snowy soft, so seeming gentle, these
Are ministers of destiny and death,
The viewless Riders of the battle field:
When sounds the rushing of their sable steeds,
Down sink the summon'd mighty, and expand
Valhalla's cloudy portals; to their thrones
They the triumphant strangers lead, and pour
Lavish the eternal beverage of the Gods.
Yon bright-hair'd three behold'st thou? would thy soul
Grasp the famed deeds of ancient time; or know
The acts and exploits of our present world?
Lo Gudur, she whose deep mysterious soul
Treasureth the past, and Rosta, who beholds
All deeds and agents of this living earth;
She too is there before whose spacious sight

The years that have not been, start up and live,
Who reads within the soul of man unborn
The unimagin'd purpose, of the sage
Skulda the sagest. Ask and thou shalt know,"
—"I am not King of Britain, have not been;
Hateful the present and the past, my soul
Thirsts for what is to come."—Then Hengist spake
In tone of mix'd authority and prayer,
"Queen of the Future, Valkyr, hear and speak,
Speak to the Son of Woden," The thin air
Instant absorb'd that glittering troop, alone
Stood Skulda with her white hair waving wide,
As trembling on the verge of palpable being,
Ready to languish too in light away.
"O'er Britain's isle doth Woden to his sons
Give empire?" She, but in no human tone,
Still from the soul's emotion harsh or soft,
In one shrill sweet unvarying tone replied,
"To thine, but not to thee."—And, "I am thine,"
Caswallon shouted loud, and sternly shook
His visionary sceptre. "Whence the foe
Fatal to Hengist, and to Hengist's sway?"—
"Not from the mountain, Saxon, from the Vale."
Heard, heeded not the Mountain Chief that strain
Dire and ill-boding, or if heard, disdain'd
Adverse, what prosperous seem'd a voice from Heaven.
"By what rich rite," he cried, "may Briton Chief
Win favour from high Woden?"—"Not the blood

Of steed or stag; a flower of earth must fade.
Blest o'er all virgins of the earth, the chaste,
The beautiful, by Heaven ordain'd to lead
The souls of valiant men to the pale hall
Of the Immortals; air her path, and Heaven
Her dwelling, with the fair and brave of earth
Her sole communion."—"By my future throne,
Proud office for the daughter of a King!
A royal damsel, mine own blood, shall join
Your cloudy mysteries."—A hue like joy
Overspread all her face and form, while slow
Into the air she brighten'd, indistinct
Even now, and now invisible. Sad seem'd
In gloomy converse with his own dark mind
Old Hengist; nor despair'd that bold of soul,
In pride of human wisdom, to revoke
The irrevocable, what himself deem'd fate
By force or fraud to master or elude.

O glorious eminence of virtuous fame,
Glorious from peril! Warrior of the Vales,
Fate-signal'd Samor, vaunt not thou the love
Of a blind people, or weak prince: thy boast
The sworn unerring hate of Britain's foe.

So pass'd they forth, one in wild joy elate,
Already in his high disdainful thought
Wielding supremacy; each of fix'd fate
Nought heeding, but what fed his fierce desires.

The car slides light, the deer bound fleet, nor sun
Nor star in all the hazy heavens. Snow, snow,

Above, around, beneath. Unblinded yet,
Drive on the kingly charioteers, and shake
The showery plumage from their locks; fast fades
The long pale plain, the giant ice-hills sink,
Lakes, rivers, seas are patient of their speed,
Huge, dim, and dusk the forest pines rush back,
Now pant the brown deer by that ocean bay.
How desolate are now thy unplough'd waves,
Dark Baltic! wandering Elbe, thy icy breast
How silent of thy hunters. Sleep thou calm
Amid thy wanton vineyards, Gaul! no more
The blue-eyed Plunderers, bridging thy broad Rhine,
Waste thy inebriate harvests' clustering pride.
Sing songs of joy, soft Italy! o'er thee
But Alaric and Attila drive on
Their chariot wheels of conquest, this their peer
In wide-destroying havoc, in renown
Of devastation, this, the fiercer third
Of human Furies, scap'st thou, therefore sing,
Soft Italy! For lo, at Hengist's call
Vast Germany dispeoples all her realm,
Deserts to silence and the beast of game
Her long and soundless forests. Seems the North
The forge of Nations, in one fleet t' exhaust
Her iron wealth of warriors; helmed high
The Suevian with his * towery knotted locks,

* Insigne gentis obliquare crinem, nodoque substringere—In altitudinem quamdam et terrorem, adituri bella, compte, ut hostium oculis, ornantur. Tac. Germ. 38.

Frisian and Scandinavian, Cimbrian rich
In the old glory of his sires, who clomb
The Alpine snows, and shook free Rome with dread.
And others nameless, numberless, send forth
Their bands; but three almost in nations came:
The Jute, the Anglian, and the Saxon, each
Leaving earth bare for many a lonesome league,
His wives, his children, and his Gods embarks,
On the fierce quest of peril and of power.
Then forth arose each Chieftain to salute
The polestar of their baleful galaxy,
Prime Architect of ruin: him who sway'd
Their hot marauding, desultory strife
To cool and steady warfare, of their limbs
The domineering soul. As each pass'd on
The Scald awoke his harsh-strung shell, and cast
The war tones of each nation to the winds;
While Hengist with imperious flattery met
Each tall and titled Leader: "Art thou here,
Bold Frisian Hermengard! a broader isle
And fairer than thy azure Rhine laves round,
Spreads for thee her green valleys. How brook'st thou,
Strong Scandinavian Lodbrog, thou the Chief
Of the renown'd Vikinger,* while the waves
So nobly riot with the wintry storms,
The tame and steadfast land? Now freely leap,

* On the Vikinger, and the more savage Berserkir, see Turner's Anglo-Saxon History, vol. i. p. 462, &c.

Arngrim, along thy Suevian forests brown
The bear and foam-tusk'd wild boar; let them leap,
A braver game is upon Britain's shore.
O Cerdic, grey in glory, young in power,
The Drave ran purple with thy boyish deeds;
A darker, redder dye, o'er silver Thames
Shall spread before thy ancient battle axe.
Ho, Offa, the rich-flowing mead hath worn
Your Jutland cups, beneath the British helms
Capacious goblets smooth and fair await
Offa's carousals. Heir of Cimbric fame,*
Frotho, whose sires within his shrine appall'd
Rome's Capitolian Jove, disdain'st not thou
To war against the slaves of Rome? Thou too
My gold-hair'd brother, are the British maids,
Or British warriors, Abisa! the first
In the fierce yearnings of thy boyish soul?
And lo the mighty Anglian; oh, unfold
Ocean! more wide, more wealthy realms, too brief,
Too narrow for Argantyr's fame, the bounds
Of this the noblest of thy wave-girt isles."
Thereat a sound of clattering shields arose,
As though the rocks around with one harsh rift
Had rent asunder: "Fair must be the land,
And brave the conquest, ample the renown,
Where Hengist leads strong Woden's sceptred sons!"

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* Cimbri parva nunc civitas sed gloriâ ingens. Tac. Germ.

But inly laugh'd Caswallon, as he long'd
With each or all to match his Briton strength;
On the prophetic Valkyr thought; and frown'd
Proud pity on the legends of their praise.
Advanced Argantyr, his bold grasp apart,
As peer his peer, led Hengist. "Thou and I,
Saxon, must have our compact; dark I know
Thy paths of strife, while my frank valour loves
The broad bright sunshine, thou by sleight and art
Min'st thy slow conquest; I with naked sword
Affront my peril, till its menacing height
Bows to the dust before me; for bold war,
For noonday battling, tender I mine arm,
But no allegiance own to subtle craft;
To peace Argantyr doth revolt, when thou
Array'st stern war in the smooth garb of guile."—
"The weak, Argantyr, and the friendless, need
Such politic skill; I take thee at thy word.
Who skulks a fox when he dare prowl a wolf?
Power charters force, where strong Argantyr stands
Is power.—And now aboard, brave Chiefs, aboard,
Or the soft spring o'ertakes our tardy keels,
And with her slothful breezes smooths the skies."
Wondrous that ocean armament; in shoals
Ride boat and shallop, countless as the waves
That show white slender streaks of foam between
Their tawny sides; save here and there towers up
Some statelier admiral in lordlier height

O'er the rude comm'nalty, whose limber ribs
Are the light wicker, cased with sturdy hides
Their level bottoms smooth.* Oh, that frail Man,
Uncharter'd from the boisterous licence rude
Of pitiless winds, and fierce unfetter'd waves;
To that unshackled libertine, wild Chance,
Surrender'd, unprotected from the burst
And inroad of the boiling surge; that he,
With such thin barrier between life and death,
Should skit and skim along the ocean waste,
Careless as maiden in a flowery field;
Valour or frenzy is it? They their toil
Ply nimbly, and with gallant oar chastise
The insurgent billows, their despotic sails
Lord o'er the wild democracy of air.
Less vast, and manned with tamer, feebler spirits,
In later days, against our Virgin Queen,
The Spaniard's mad Armada; but the flag
Of Howard, and the Almighty's stormy hand,
Belied their braggard baptism, so they won
Brave conquest! graves in ocean's soundless depths
Or on the whirlpool-girded Orcade s.
So onward rides that Pagan fleet: young Spring

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* Primum cana salix, madefacto vimine parvam
Texitur in puppim, cæsoque induta juvenco,
Vectoris patiens, tumidum super emicat amnem;
Sic Venetus stagnante Pado; fusoque Britannus
Navigat oceano. LUCAN.

Hath scarcely tipt the leafless woods with green;
Tyne's jetty tide is blanched with German oars.
Now whither with that dark-brow'd priest set forth
Old Hengist and the Briton Mountain Lord?
Is it, fell Hengist, that Caswallon's name
Transcend thine own in British hate, that he
Close-link'd by fellowship in rites accurst,
Be hence entirely, execrably thine?
Or, from weak credence in such impious Gods,
Urgest thou that fell sacrifice? Oh, where
The spotless Virgin doom'd (so wild the creed)
The Valkyr's airy troop to join, and glide
Immortal through Valhalla's cloudy halls?

BOOK IV.

ARGUMENT.

Scene. The Banks of Derwent Water. Lilian (the daughter of Caswallon). Prince Vortimer (the son of Vortigern). The seizure of Lilian. Caswallon. The Banks of the Eamont. The Sacrifice. Vortimer. Sailing of the Invading Fleet from the Tyne to the Isle of Thanet. The Landing. The Embassy. Terms of Peace. Opposition of Samor. Peace. Prodigies.

SUNK was the sun, and up the slope of heaven,
Like maiden on a lonely pilgrimage,
Moved the meek Star of Eve; the wandering air
Breathed odours; wood, and waveless lake, like man,
Slept, weary of the garish babbling day.
Dove of the wilderness, thy snowy wing
In slumber droops not; Lilian, thou alone,
'Mid the deep quiet, wakest! Dost thou rove,
Idolatrous of yon majestic moon,
That like a crystal-throned queen in Heaven,
Seems with her present deity to hush
To beauteous adoration all the earth?
The solemn silent mountain tops stand up

As though to worship; the translucent streams
Down th' hill sides glittering, cherish the pure light
Beneath the shadowy foliage o'er them flung
At intervals; the lake, so silver white,
Glistens, that indistinct the snowy swans
Bask in the radiance cool: doth Lilian muse
To that apparent Queen her vesper hymn?
Nursling of solitude, her infant couch
No mother watch'd, within th' untimely grave
She slept unwaking; scornful turn'd aloof
Caswallon, of those pure instinctive joys
By fathers felt, when playful infant grace,
Touch'd with a feminine softness, round the heart,
Winds its light maze of undefin'd delight,
Contemptuous; he with haughty joy beheld
His boy, fair Malwyn, him in bossy shield
Rock'd proudly, him upbore to mountain steep,
Fierce and undaunted, for their dangerous nest
To battle with the eagle's clamorous brood.
But she the while from human tenderness
Estranged, and gentler feelings that light up
The cheek of youth with rosy joyous smile,
Like a forgotten lute, play'd on alone
By chance-caressing airs, amid the wild
Beauteously pale, and sadly playful, grew,
A lonely child, by not one human heart
Belov'd and loving none; nor strange, if learnt
Her nature's fond affections to embrace

Things senseless and inanimate: she lov'd
All flow'rets that with rich embroidery fair
Enamel the green earth, the odorous thyme,
Wild rose, and roving eglantine, nor spar'd
To mourn their fading forms with childish tears.
Grey birch and aspen light she lov'd, that droop
Fringing the crystal stream; the sportive breeze
That wanton'd with her brown and glossy locks,
The sunbeam chequering the fresh bank. Ere dawn
Wandering, and wandering still at dewy eve,
By Glenderamakin's flower-empurpled marge,
Derwent's blue lake, or Greta's wildering glen.
Rare sound to her was human voice, scarce heard,
Save of her aged nurse, or shepherd maid
Soothing the child with simple tale or song.
Hence, all she knew of earthly hopes and fears,
Life's sins and sorrows; better known the voice
Belov'd of lark from misty morning cloud
Blithe carolling, and wild melodious notes
Heard mingling in the summer wood, or plaint,
By moonlight, of the lone night-warbling bird.
Nor they of love unconscious, all around
Fearless, familiar they their descants sweet
Tun'd emulous. For she was known by all
That tenant wood or rock, dun roe or deer,
Sunning his dappled side at noontide crouch'd,
Courting her fond caress, nor fled her gaze
The brooding dove, but murmur'd sounds of joy.

One summer noon, the silvery birchen shade,
Pendent above from dripping crag, her brow
Veil'd from the fiery sunbeam; gems of spray
Gleam'd cool around with watery rainbow-light,
From a pure streamlet down its rocky bed
Dashing sweet music; she on mossy couch
Sate listening to the thrush, whose blithesome notes
In amorous contention Echo caught
Responsive. Sudden droop'd its flagging wing
The timorous bird of song, and fluttering sought
Soft refuge in the maiden's snowy breast.
She o'er the nestling prisoner folding light
Her careless vest, stood gazing, where, awhile
Dark in a sun-illumin'd cloud, came down
A swooping falcon: at her sight it check'd;
Its keen eye bright with joy, th' admiring bird,
Fearfully beauteous, floated on the air,
Its silver wings, and glossy plumage grey,
Glanc'd in the sun light. Up the maiden gaz'd,
Smiling in pale and terrified delight,
And seem'd for that lov'd warbler in her breast
Beseeching mercy. 'Mid the green wood sank
Th' obedient bird; she, joyous at his flight,
Her bosom half reveal'd, with gentle hand
Caressing smooth'd her captive's ruffled plumes.
Anon a frighted thankful look around
She cast—and lo a human shape stood there,
Or more than human; stately on his arm

The falcon sate, and proudly flapp'd his wings.
She turn'd to fly, yet fled not, turn'd to gaze,
Yet dared not raise her downcast eye; she felt
Her warm cheek, why she knew not, blush, her hand
Unconscious closer drew her bosom's fold.
With accent mild the Stranger brief delay
Entreated; she, albeit his gentle words
Fell indistinct on her alarmed ear,
Listening delay'd, and still at fall of eve
Delay'd, e'en then with dim reverted eye,
Slow lingering on her winding homeward path.
No more in pomp of war, or vaulting steed,
Joyeth the Son of Vortigern, nor feast
With jocund harpings, and rich-jewell'd dames,
Outshining in their pride the starry heavens.
As fair the spring-flowers bloom, as graceful droops
The wild ash spray, as sweet the mountain bee
Murmurs, melodious breathes the twilight grove,
Unheard of her, unheeded, who erewhile
Visited, constant as the morning dew,
Those playmates and sweet sisters of her soul.
In one sole image sees the enamour'd maid
Concentrated all qualities of love,
All beauty, grace, and majesty. The step
Of tall stag prancing stately down the glen,
The keen bright fierceness of the eagle's glance,
And airy gentleness of timorous roe,
And, more than all, a voice more soothing soft

Than wild-bird's carol, or the murmuring brook,
With eloquence endued and melting words
So wondrous; though unheard since eve, the sounds
Come mingling with her midnight sleep, and make
The damask of her slumbering cheek grow warm.
And now she sits beneath the moonlight rock,
Chiding the rippling waters that efface
That image fancy-drawn on its pure breast,
Garb, form, and feature, Vortimer; though mute,
As prodigal of fondness, his bright face
Seems to look up to her with tenderer love,
Than wild-dove to its mate at earliest spring.
Oft hath that moonlight wax'd and wan'd, since last
He parted, all of him that could depart;
Save what no distance could remove, the words,
The look, the touch, that live within her still,
The promise of return sworn on her lips.
And hark it comes, his steed along the glen;
She o'er the lucid mirror stooping, braids
Hasty her dark-brown tresses; bashful smiles
Of virgin vanity flit o'er her cheek,
Tinging its settled paleness. Now 'tis near—
But ne'er did Vortimer with iron hoof
Bruise the green flowery sward that Lilian loves.
A gentle frown of winning fond reproach
Arch'd her dark eyelash, as her head she turn'd,
Ah! not on Vortimer. Her father stood
Before her, stern and dark, his trembling child

Cheer'd nor fond word, nor greeting kiss; his arm
Clasp'd round her, on his steed again he sprung.
And on through moonlight and through shade he spurr'd,
Like some rude hunter with a snow-white fawn
His midnight prey. And all his flinty road
Gleam'd like a meteor's track. Ere long the path
'Gan upward wind, the fiery courser paus'd
Breathless, she faintly raising up her form;
"Oh, whither bear ye me?" with panting voice,
Murmur'd. Caswallon spake unmov'd, "To death."
"Death, father, death, ah didst thou say to death!
Aye me! when maiden dies, the smiling morn,
The wild birds singing on the twinkling spray,
Wake her no more; the summer wind breathes soft,
Waving the fresh grass o'er her narrow bed,
Gladdening to all but her. Senseless and cold
She lies; while all she lov'd, unheard, unseen,
Mourn round her." There broke off her faltering voice.
Dimly her farewell glance she cast around.
Never before so beautiful the lake
Lay, like a sky, distinct with stars; the groves,
Green banks and shadowy dells, her haunts of bliss,
Smil'd, ne'er before so lovely, their last smile;
The fountains seem'd to wail, the twilight mists,
On the wet leaves were weeping all for her.
Had not her own tears blinded her, there too
She surely had beheld a youthful form

Wandering the solitary glen. But loud
The courser neigh'd, down bursting, wood and rock
Fly backward; the wide plain its weary length
Vainly outspreads; and now 'tis midnight deep.
Ends in a narrow glen their fleet career.
That narrow glen was pal'd with rude black rocks,
There slowly roll'd a brook its glassy depth;
Now in the moon-beams white, now dark in gloom.
She liv'd, she breath'd, she felt, to her denied
That sole sad happiness the wretched know,
Ev'n from excess of feeling, not to feel.
Behold her gentle, delicate, and frail,
Where all around, through rifted rock and wood,
Grim features glare, huge helmed forms obscure
People the living gloom, with dreary light
Glimmering, as of the moon from iron arms
Coldly reflected: lovely stands she there,
Like a blest Angel 'mid th' accurst of Hell.
A voice is heard.—"Lo, mighty Monarch, here
The stream of sacrifice; to man alone
Fits the proud privilege of bloody death
By shaft or mortal steel; to Hela's realm,
Unblooded, woundless, must the maid descend;
So in the bright Valhalla shall she crown
For Woden and his Peers the cup of bliss."
Her white arms round her father's rugged neck
Winding with desperate fondness, she 'gan pour,
As to some dear, familiar, long-lov'd heart,

Most eloquent her inarticulate prayers.
Is the dew gleaming on his cheek? or weeps
The savage and the stern, yet still her sire?
But some rude arm of one, whose dreadful face
She dared not gaze on, seiz'd her. Gloomy stood,
Folding his wolf-skin mantle to conceal
The shuddering of his huge and mailed form,
Caswallon. Then again the voice came forth,
"Fast wanes the night, the Gods brook no delay,
Monarch of Britain, speed." He, at that name
Shaking all human from his soul, flung back
The foldings of his robe, and stood elate,
As boastful of some glorious deed; nor knew
Barbarian blind as proud, who feels no more
The mercies and affections of his kind,
Casts off God's image from his darken'd soul.
A sound is heard amid the silent night,
A sound of broken waters; rings of light
Float o'er the dark stream, widening to the shore.*
And lo, her re-appearing form, as soft

* Homo autem quem sors immolandum obtulerat, in fontem qui ad locum sacrificiorum scaturiebat, vivus immergebatur: qui si facile effiaret animam, faustum renunciabant sacerdotes votum: moxque inde ereptum in vicinum nemus, quod sacrum credebant, suspendentes, inter Deos translatum affirmabant. Quo factum erat, ut beatum se crederet, qui eo immolatione e vivis excederet. Accidit nonnunquam reges ipsos simili sorte delectos victimari. Quod quia faustissimum regno libamen æstimabatur, totius populi multitudo cum summâ congratulatione tam insignes victimas prosequebantur. Enimvero sic defunctos non omnino mori, sed tam illos quam se ipsos immortales esse. Olaus Magnus, book iii. cap. 6.

As fountain Nymph by weary hunter seen,
In the lone twilight glen; the moonlight gleam
Falls tenderly on her beseeching face,
Like th' halo of expiring Saint; she seems
Lingering to lie upon the water top,
As though to feel once more that light belov'd;
And tremulously mov'd her soundless lips
As syllabling the name of Vortimer.
Then deep she sank, and quiet the cold stream,
Unconscious of its guilt, went eddying on,
And look'd up lovely to the gazing moon.

What deepest thoughts, young Vortimer, have place
Within thy secret breast? thou slowly rid'st
By Eamont's alder brink, thy silver arms
Through the brown copse with moonshine glittering dim.
Is't that late fight by Thanet, wheñ the fire
From thine and Horsa's steel, frequent and red,
Burnt the pale sea-spray? * or thy kingly charge,
With show of British war, to curb and check
The threatening Caledonian? or what bathes
Youth's cheek in bitterest and most gall-like tears;
Thy father's shame, the curse that, unredeem'd
By thy young valour, his once kingly name
Devotes to everlasting infamy?

* Vortimer, or Guortemir, according to Nennius, the son of Vortigern, did keep up a brave and successful warfare against the Saxons, until the return of Hengist with an overpowering force. See Nennius and Mr. Turner's Anglo-Saxon History, vol. i. p. 243. The death of Horsa I reserved for a later part of the poem.

Or is't that gentle Maid by Derwent lake,
Her flower-wreath'd tresses and her pale sweet smile?
How pleasant, after war and journeying fleet
To Britain's Northern realm, from Kent's white cliffs,
Once more to see her early gliding foot
Skimming the morning dews, to hear her voice,
As artless, as melodious, melt on air,
Among the wood-birds' matins, to surprise
Thine own dear name upon her bashful lips!
What floats along the waters, a dead white
Amid the glittering moonshine! where the stream
Runs black beneath the thicket boughs, still white,
Still slowly drifting, like a dying swan,
In snowy beauty, on its watery bier?
Oh, were but Lilian here! perchance its neck
May struggle up, to the still waves to chant
Its own soft requiem, the most gentle breath,
Most fancifully, delicately sweet,
That ever soothes the midnight's dewy calm.*
Near, and more near—it takes a human shape:
Some luckless maiden; haply her lov'd youth
Awaits her at the well-known place, upbraids
Her broken faith, as fond as Vortimer,
As full of love. 'Tis closer now; he leaps
From his high steed: he draws it to the shore.

* I fear that I have, not very correctly, introduced a classical vulgar error about the beauty of the notes of the dying swan, where it was not likely to prevail.

Scarce time for fancy or for fear, the moon
Quench'd her broad light behind a rushing cloud,
And utter darkness settled round. He sate
In solitude, with that cold lifeless corpse;
He dared not leave it, for a hideous thought
Flash'd through his brain.—"Why is it like to thee,
My Lilian! be it any one but thou—
Cold, deathly, irremediably cold:
It cannot be, and yet 'twas like: her height,
Her slender waist like Lilian's, and her hair
As dainty soft, and trick'd with flowers; 'tis she,
And I will kiss her, pardon if I err,
If stranger lips—round, smooth like thine; but oh!
So coldly passive! when we parted, thine
Thwarted me with a struggling bashfulness,
And, won at length, with meek surrender swell'd.
Wild and delirious fancy! many a maid
Hath full round lips, to trick the hair with flowers
'Tis common vanity. If dead, even dead,
So chilly senseless Lilian could not be
To Vortimer's embrace. Oh, but for light,
Though dim and scanty as a glow-worm's fire,
To make me surely, hopelessly undone!
Aught but this racking ignorance. Dawn forth,
Thou envious sluggard, Morn! one beam, but one—
Thou pitiless cold Moon!"—Morn dawn'd not yet,
And pale and dusk remain'd the moonless sky.
Darkness around, the dead within his arms,

He sate, even as a poison'd man awaits,
Yet haunted by a miserable hope,
Death's manifest mortal sickness in his veins,
And yearns to live or die, scarce cares he which,
So one were certain. But when slow the dawn
Unveil'd its filmy light, he turn'd away
From that which might be Lilian's face, and pray'd
Even for the hateful, dun, uncertain gloom;
As though the doubtful, not quite desperate grief,
Were comfort, and not lightly to be lost.
It seem'd unconsciously he raised her up,
Unconsciously declined his heavy eye,
Where slowly brighten'd on that lifeless face
The unwelcome beauty; one tress lay across,
Permitting yet a miserable doubt;
Move it he dare not, but the officious wind
Cast it aside. As if the thought, the fear
Were new, were sudden, like the lightning flash
That sears the infant in its mother's arms,
Smote on him the dire certainty. He clasp'd
Her damp dead cheek to his.—"Thus, meet we thus,
Lilian! my Lilian! silent, strange, and cold?
I do not bid thee fondly gaze, nor ask
Long rapturous welcoming,—but speak, but move!
Lilian; ne'er thought I, I should live to loathe
Thy gentle presence.—Oh, for thee, for thee
Have I forsaken all my warrior trust,
Been truant to my country's cause for thee.

By the green Tees my murmuring camp upbraids
My soft unwarlike absence—aye, upbraids!
For I am past fate's utmost malice now.
Shall Fame with its vain pomp, and hollow clang
Of cymbal praise, allure me forth, a bland
And courteous parasite in her fond train?
No; hang thou there, my helm, and thou my shield
Rust on yon bank, my sword, one duty more,
To shape the smooth turf for my Lilian's grave;
Thy bridal bed, sweet Maid, it should have been,
Where thou and Vortimer had met. Thy grave
Shall be my field of honour, all my palms
The flowers the courteous spring shall lavish there;
And I'll have glory—in my depth of woe—
A wild and strange delight—in my despair—
Not yet, the cold earth must not part us yet,
Unfold, once, once again those dark-fringed eyes,
One throb, one tremor, though it be the last
In thy soft limbs—dead, senseless, icy dead!"—
Thus o'er his buried Love that wretched Prince,
Unknown the hell-born secret of her doom,
Arraign'd blind Chance for Man's most impious sin.
But southward far the savage fleet bore on.
On Flamborough-head the morning sun look'd dusk
Through their dim sails; where Scarborough's naked foot
Spurns back, and saith, "No further," to the waves,
From cleft and cave the sullen sea-birds sprang,
Wheeling in air with dizzy flight, and shriek'd

Their dreary fears abroad. The Shepherd, wont
To view o'er level Lindesay the broad sea,
Blue trembling to the soft horizon's line,
Sees, like a baleful portent from the heavens,
That sable Navy warping slowly past.
Th' Icenian coast * (that sceptred woman's realm,
Bonduca, who from her fair body wash'd
The stain of Roman lust in Roman blood)
Looks haggard, with distracted faces wan,
Of age and youth, the woman and the child,
From beach or steep cliff, gazing now to Heaven,
Now on that ocean army's watery march.
A brighter and more British battlement,
Than tender forms of women, trembling crowds
Of infants and decrepit age, from Thames
To Thanet crown the pale-brow'd cliffs of Kent.
As when from Aulis that immortal fleet
Swept the Ægean, all the hollow beach,
And every Phrygian promontory glow'd
With brazen battle; here the Morning's Son,
Swarth Memnon, here the invulnerable strength
Of Cycnus, here the beardless Troilus,
Unwounded yet by Cresseide's arrowy eyes;
Here Hector, seeking through the watery route
The tall Thessalian prow, with fatal thirst
Furious even then the silver-footed Queen

* Norfolk and Suffolk, the kingdom of the Iceni, of which Boadicea was Queen.

To orphan of her heaven-soul'd boy. So bold,
In bright-arm'd splendour tower'd the rampart brave
Of British Warriors on that pallid shore.
On Thanet are the Sea-King Brethren met.
Their greeting in that fiercely sportive strain
That, elevate with imminent success,
Scoffs at past ill.—" On Thanet's marge well met,
Erle Horsa; now methinks our spacious realm
Is somewhat waste and shrunken, since we last
View'd its fair confines; for such noble guests
And numerous as attend our royal march,
Our kingdom's harbours seem too close, our land
Narrow and brief for such free spirits' range.
Ill husbandry! our fertile province wide
To barter for this spare and meagre isle.
Horsa, for anchorage and breathing space
Our weary mariners must e'en go sue
Their gentle Briton neighbours; haply they,
Knowing our native courtesy, may cede
From their abundance some fair leagues of earth."
" Ingrate and blind (cried Horsa), they forswear
Our mild dominion; to their King's behest
Rebellious, they proclaim the British earth
The undivided, indivisible right
Of their old British sires, nor may't descend
Sever'd and mutilate to their British sons.—
'They shook not off the Roman's gentle sway,
To slave it to Barbarians.'—Specious terms,

But with such cogent arguments enforc'd,
We could but shroud us in this narrow isle
From such fierce disputants; a desperate spirit
Was that old Cæsar, who first planted here
The tree of conquest."—"Holds the King his faith?"—
"Oh, thy fair daughter hath a soft-link'd chain
For the old royal Lion; he obeys,
Like a slim greyhound in a silken leash,
Her eye-won empire. But there walks abroad
A youngling of the brood; no blood but mine
Might flesh the ravening of his dainty jaws,
This Vortimer, this bright-ey'd, beardless boy.
Aye, front to front I met him, but their bands
Rent us asunder, and my crest-lopp'd helm,
My scatter'd blood, pass'd unaveng'd. Now earth
Swallow me in my wrath, Heaven's bolt sear up
My constant heart, if I forget thee, Boy,
Nor shear the gay sprouts of thy budding fame!"—
"A child their mightiest!"—"Scornful Hengist, no;
A manlier spirit rides the furious storm,
One in whom bravery and counsel vie
For excellence: wild battle wears the shape
His will ordains; and if the rebel swerve,
He forces it with his strong sword t' obey
His high behest, and take the fate he gives."—
"His name—his name!"—"The Chieftain of the Vales,
So sounds his title."—Then a bitter groan,
'Twere hard to tell from what bad passion, hate

Or dread, or savage hope, from Hengist's breast
Burst forth; with his mail'd hand he clasp'd his head,
As though to mould the discord of his thoughts
To one strong mass; then, as though all resolv'd,
A light and laughing carelessness relax'd
Those knitted furrows, while his eager soul
Clasp'd the dim future with a fearless joy.

But on the mainland, in sad council, meet
The Baronage of Britain, timorous hearts
In hollow unsubstantial valour trick'd,
While those who dare show fear, fear undisguis'd.
Their first fierce rush of courage pass'd, like flame
The mountain heath devouring, with fleet blaze,
But transitory! they of generous thoughts,
Of appetites whose sole rich draught is fame,
Wanting the steadfast strength, the impulse bold
Wanting of love devotional, heart-deep
To their own native land; they hence, but now
With power in fierce and gallant charge to sweep
From Kent's fair valleys Horsa's Saxon train,
Downcast in mien and mind, with prospect sad
Now count that countless navy's gathering sails.

Not now the rapture and the restlessness,
The riding and the racing, burst and shock,
And sudden triumph, or as sudden death;
Now long, long wasting of the limbs and life,
The circumspect cold strife, drear march, damp watch,
Forepining day, and vigilant sleepless night,

Eternal and interminable war,
Before them spreads its wide and endless tract.
Gone all soft joys, all courtly luxuries gone:
The languor of the bath, the harp, the song
By twilight in the lady's sleepless porch,
The loitering in the sunny colonnade,
The circus, and the theatre, the feast
Usurping the mild midnight's solemn hours; *
From holier hearts, the chapel and the prayer,
The matins, and melodious vesper hymn,
The bridal with its gay and jocund route,
The baptism with its revel, gone—all gone.
The burial on cold battle field, unhymn'd,
Unmourn'd, untomb'd; nor taper, tear, nor rite:
Even pious commerce between God and man
Broke off, save hasty prayer ere battle morn,
Cold orison upon the midnight watch.
Sole pillar of the quaking temple, firm,
Inflexible, on the foundation deep
Of his stern spirit, Samor bears the weight
Of imminent danger; and his magic voice
With shame, with praise, with soothing, and with scorn,
Scatters the languid mists from off their souls,
And from their blanch'd cheeks drives the faint dismay.

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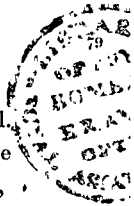
* The remains of Roman cities, villas, and baths, so frequently discovered, show that Britain, under the Romans, had attained to a high state of civilization; in some parts, no doubt, to luxury.

What ho! a trumpet from the Thanet shore,
Truce for the Saxon's embassage! His hand
Outholding the white wand of peace, came on
Old Cerdic, and address'd the assemblage proud.
"Britons, most strange 'twill sound, while our vast fleet
Affronts your pale cliffs with fierce show of war,
Yet would we peace with Britain. Deem not this,
In the vain arrogance of brief success,
The enforc'd concession of faint fear; look round
Your narrow camp, then gaze abroad, our sails
Outnumber your few helms, and fear ye know
No wonted tenant in the German breast.
This know ye further, what we Saxons dare,
That dare we nobly, openly. Far south
A rich and wanton land its champaign green
Spreads to the sun, there all the basking hills
Glow with the red wine, there the fresh air floats
So fragrant, that 'tis pleasure but to breathe,
Where endless summer paints the cloudless skies;
And our old Bards have legends, how of yore
From that soft land bright eagles, fledged with gold,
Danube or Rhine o'erflew, their Cæsars fired
Our holy groves with insolent flames, and girt
Our fierce free foresters with slavish chains,
That scarce bold Herman * rent their massive links.
Not to despoil a mild and gentle isle,

* The German popular name for Arminius.

For full fierce vengeance on Imperial Rome,
Embattled Germany pours forth. Then hear,
Brave islanders! our Saxon terms of peace:
Ransom this province, ours by royal boon
Of Vortigern, your King, at liberal price;
And for your gold we cede, what deepest wounds
Our German souls to part with, our revenge.
With most unwonted patience will we bear
Erle Horsa's camp with fierce assault o'erborne,
And British wolves full-gorged with Saxon gore.
Then not as foes, but friends, we disembark
Our sea-worn crews; ourselves, the Chiefs of war,
In solemn festival to your high Lords,
Pledge on the compact our unwavering faith.
But if ye still with lavish thirst desire
War's crimson goblets, freely let them flow!
If the fierce pastime of the fire and sword
Be jocund to you, then let slip the game!
Your city walls are not so tall and high,
But our fleet flames may climb their dizzy towers,
And revel on their pinnacles of pride;
Your breast-plate not so adamantine proof,
But our keen falchions to your hearts may find
A mortal passage. And not we alone,
Caswallon, at our call, o'er the wide North
Wakes the hoarse music of his rushing cars;
Then choose your bride, oh Britons, lo, each courts
Your arms with rival beauties, Peace and War."

Thus half in courtesy, defiant half,
To wait their answer he withdrew. Ere died
His voice, ere from a single lip assent
Had parted, Samor rose, and cried aloud :—
" Britons ! oh Britons ! hinds fear fawning wolves,
The peasant flies the snake that smoothly coils
Round his numb foot its gay enamell'd rings ;
I dread a peaceful Saxon. Was't for this,
Round Vortigern's tame soul that proud-ey'd Queen
Wound her voluptuous trammels ? did the meek,
The hermit Constans, bleed for this ? Oh, Peace
Is like the rain from heaven, the clouds must burst,
Ere earth smile lovely with its lucid dews.
Peace must be won by war ; swords, swords alone
Work the strong treaty. Shall our slaves, who sold
Their blood, their lives to Britain for base hire,
On our fair provinces set now their price ?
Give gold ! as wisely might the miser lead
The robber to his treasury, and then cry,
' Go hence, and plunder ; ' 'twere to tempt, to bribe
The undream'd perjury, and spread a lure,
To bring the parted spoiler swiftly back.
Outnumber us ! and are we sunk so low
To count our valour by our helmet crests ?—
Oh, every soul that loves his native land,
It is a legion ; oh what fire shall sear
The hydra heads of liberty ? Our earth
Shall burst to bearing of as boon a crop



Of sworded soldiers, as of bladed grass,
And all our hills branch out in groves of steel.
So thought our fathers, so they bravely strove
For the bleak freedom of their steamy moors,
Their black oak's fruitage coarse, and rites uncouth
Of Druid, by the beal-fire's lurid flame.
But we whose land refin'd and civilised,
Spreads golden plenty round her marble towns;
Where handmaid arts anticipate our wants,
Where bloodless altars to the Lord of Hosts
Arise, and his Incarnate Son. Shall we
Our gifted Britain yield, our hallow'd isle
To godless rude Barbarians? 'Tis not now
Merely to 'scape the heaven-branded name of slaves,
For licence to breathe where we choose, and wield
At our own wayward will unfetter'd limbs.
Oh, if we fail, free Christians must sink down
To Heathen slaves, our gilded palace roofs
Echo the riot of new Lords, our wives
Be like base plunder, vilely bought and sold;
Worse shame! worse sin! the murky Heathen groves
O'er our fallen Churches their pale gloom advance;
Our holy air go dim and reeking up
With impious incense to blood-beverag'd Gods;
The deep damnation of a Pagan creed
Rot in our children's souls! Then be our peace
Not hasty, as of timorous souls that snatch
At every feeble reed, but stoop we to it

As with a conqueror's pride, with steel-glov'd hand
Seal our stern treaty. So if they depart,
And with their spread sails seek their mad emprize.
But while one prow dash menace on our shore,
Our earth is patient of one armed hoof,
Tame treaty, temporizing truce, avaunt!
The foreign banner that usurps our winds,
Be it a foe! strange steel that doth divert
One ray of sunlight from our shores, be that
The scope and centre of all British swords!
So build we up our peace on the strong rock
Of brave defiance, cement it with scorn,
Set bright-arm'd Valour in its jealous porch
Bold Warden; from our own intrinsic strength,
Not from the mercy of our foes, be free."
Oh the soul's fire, of that swift element
Th' intensest, spreads around, and mounts on high
With unrestrain'd contagion; it hath caught
In all that kingly conclave, it hath blazed.
But then rose Elidure, with bashful mien,
Into himself half shrinking, from his lips
The dewy words persuasive dropt, and smooth,
And crept into the chambers of the soul,
Like the bee's liquid honey:—"And thou too,
Enamour'd of this gaudy murderer, War!
Samor, in hunger's meagre hour who scorns
A fair-skinn'd fruit, because its inward pulp
May be or black or hollow? gentle Peace

May be a rich-rob'd evil; war, stern war,
Wears manifest its hideousness, and bares
Deformities the Sun shrinks to behold.
Because 'tis in the wanton roll of chance
That he may die, who desperately leaps
Into the pit, with mad untimely arms
To clasp annihilation? Were no path
But through the grim and haunted wilds of strife
To the mild shrine of peace, maids would not wear
Their bridal chaplets with more joy, than I
Th' oppressive morion: then th' old vaunt were wise,
To live in freedom, or for freedom die.
Then would I too dissemble, with vain boast,
Our island's weakness; wear an iron front,
Though all within were silken, soft, and smooth.
For what are we, slight sunshine birds, thin plum'd
For dalliance with the mild, luxurious airs,
To grapple with these vultures, whose broad vans,
Braced by their icy tempests, with the wind
Of their strong flight would dash us down to earth.
Then, Samor, eminent in strength and power,
It were most proud for thee alone to break
The hot assault, with single arm t' arrest
The o'erwhelming ruin—ruin, ah! too sure.
It were most proud; to us sad comfort; sunk,
Amerc'd of all our fair, luxurious hours,
Our rich abodes the wandering war-flame's feast.
Samor, our fathers fear'd not death; cast off

Most careless their coarse lives; with nought to lose,
They fear'd no loss; too blest this state of ours,
Its joyances, affections, hopes, desires,
For such rash venture. Oh, then, be we not
Most wretched from the fear of wretchedness?
If war must be, in God's name let war be:
But, oh, with clinging hand, with lingering love,
Clasp we our mistress, Peace. Gold! what is gold?
My fair and wealthy palace set to sale,
Cast me a beggar to the elements' scorn;
But leave me peace, oh, leave my country peace,
And I will call it mercy, bounty, love!"—
So spake he, with vain show of public zeal
Blazoning his weak intent; and so prevail'd
His soft and languid eloquence. Each rent
The golden frontlet from his helm, cast down
His breastplate's golden scales, in liberal strife
Prodigal rivals at rich price to buy
That baleful merchandise, their country's shame.
Oh, where the royal Brethren now? the pride
Serene of Emrys? where thy Dragon crest,
Prince Uther? for thy voice, young Vortimer!
Seal, Samor, thy prophetic lips; in vain
Thou warnest, threatenest, as if heaven-inspired.
Will the winds hear thee? will the rocks obey?
Or hearts than wind more light, than rocks more cold?
Grey Cerdic hath their faint award; they part
Jocund, and light of hope; but Samor grasp'd

The hand of Elidure :—" My childhood's friend,
I sue thee by all joys we two have shared,
Our interchange of souls, communion free
Of every thought and motion of our hearts,
Our infant pastimes, and our graver joys,
Go not thou to this feast."—" Doth Samor go?"—
" Britain must have no danger, gentle friend,
That Samor shares not; thou art noted well
To hate the riotous and brawling feast.
With thy fond bride, thy Evelene, await
Silent the knowledge whether thou or I
Have err'd in this day's council."—" No, best friend,
Samor must have no danger Elidure
Shares not; oh, why this cold and gloomy dread?
In the deep centre of our isle be held
This dreaded banquet. Samor, ne'er thought I,
While my mild blood ran constant, thine would flag,
And curdle with the pallid frost of fear."
'Tis famed, that then, albeit amid the rush
Of clamorous joy unmark'd, in drearier days
Remember'd, signs on earth, and signs in heaven,
With loud and solemn interdict arraign'd
That hasty treaty; maniacs kindled up
With horrible intelligence the orbs
Of their deep hollow eyes, and meaning strange
Gave order to their wandering utterance: stream'd
Amid the dusky woods broad sheeted flames;
The blue fires on the fen at noon-day danc'd

Their wavering morrice, and the bold ey'd wolves
Howl'd on the sun. Life ominous and uncouth
Seiz'd upon ancient and forgotten things;
The Cromlechs rock'd, the Druid circles wept
Cold ruddy dews; as of that neighbouring feast
Conscious, the tall Stone Henge did shrilly shriek
As with a whirlwind, though no cloud was mov'd
In the still skies. A wailing, as of harps,
Sad with no mortal sorrow, sail'd abroad
Through the black oaks of Mona. Old deep graves
Were restless, and arm'd bones of buried men
Lay clattering in their stony cells. 'Twas faith,
White women upon sable steeds were seen
In fleet career 'neath the rank air; the earth
Gave up no echo to their noiseless feet,
And on them look'd the moon with leprous light
Prodigious; haply like those slender shapes
In the ice desert by Caswallon seen.
From Mona to the snowy Dover cliffs,
From Skiddaw to St. Michael's vision'd mount,
Unknown from heaven, or earth, or nether pit,
Unknown or from the living or the dead,
From being of this world, or nature higher,
Pass'd one long shriek, whereat old Merlin leap'd
From his hoar haunt by Snowdon, and in dusk
And mystic descant mutter'd all abroad,
What the thin air grew cold and dim to hear.
'Tis said, rude portents in the Church of God,

With insolent noises, brake the holy calm.
The grey owl hooted at the noontide chaunt,
The young owl clamour'd at the matin song,
The pies and ravens, from the steeple top,
To the priest's Benedicite moan'd back
A sullen hoarse Amen; and obscene bats
Around the altar candlesticks did flap
Their leathern wings. Yea, from his stricken hand
The white stol'd Bishop to the earth let fall
The consecrated chalice; the Lord's blood
Flow'd, and was mingled with th' unhallow'd dust.

BOOK V.

ARGUMENT.

General rejoicing on account of the Peace. Banquet of Peace on Salisbury Plain, near Ambri (Ambresbury). Massacre. Samor. Stonehenge. House of Elidure. The Bright City (Gloucester). The House of Samor. Desolation. Samor's vow of Patriotism and Vengeance.

SWAN of the Ocean! on thy throné of waves
Exultant dost thou sit, thy mantling plumes
Ruffled with joy, thy stately neck elate,
To welcome peace, like Angel visitant,
Descending, amid joy of earth and heaven,
To bless thy fair abode. The laughing skies
Look bright, oh, Britain! on thy hour of bliss.
In sunshine fair the blithe and bounteous May
O'er hill and vale goes dancing; blooming flowers
Under her wanton feet their dewy bells
Shake joyous; clouds of fragrance round her float.
City to city cries, and town to town,
Wafting glad tidings: wide the churches throw

Their flower-hung portals, resonant with pomp
Of priests and people, to the Lord their prayers
Pouring, the richest incense of pure hearts.
With garland and with song the maids go forth,
And mingle with the iron ranks of war
Their forms of melting softness; gentle gales
Blow music o'er the festal land from harp
And merry rebeck, till the floating air
Seems harmony; mute all fierce sounds of war;
No breath within the clarion's brazen throat;
Soft slumber in the war-steed's drooping mane.
Not in the palace proud, or gorgeous hall,
The banqueting of Peace; on Ambri plain *
Glitter the white pavilions, to the sun
Their snowy pomp unfolding; there the land
Pours its rejoicing multitudes to see
Briton and Saxon, in majestic league,
Mingling their blazon'd banners' streaming folds.
Blithe as a virgin bridal, rich and proud
As gorgeous triumph for fair kingdom won,
Flows forth the festal train; with arms elate
The Mothers bear their infants to behold
That Hengist, whose harsh name erewhile had blanch'd
Their cheeks to paleness; they their little hands
Clap, smiling, half-delighted, half in dread.

* The part of Salisbury Plain near Ambresbury is the place where tradition places this scene.

Upon that hated head, from virgin hands,
Rain showers of bloom; beneath those hated feet
Is strewn a flowery pavement; harp and voice
Hymn blessings on the Saxon, late denounc'd
Th' implacable, inexorable foe.
Lordly they pass'd and lofty; other land
Save Britain, of such mighty despots proud,
Had made a boast of slavery; giant men
In soul as body. Not the Goth more dread,
Tall Alaric, who through imperial Rome
March'd conqueror: nor that later Orient chief,
Turban'd Mohammed, who o'er fall'n Byzance
His moony ensign planted: they, unarm'd,
Yet terrible, went haughty on, of power
A world to vanquish, not one narrow isle.
The hollow vault of heav'n is rent with shouts,
Wild din and hurry of tumultuous joy
Moves the vast throng, for lo, in perfect strength,
Consummate height of manhood, but the glow,
The purple grace of youth, th' ambrosial hue
Of life's fresh morning, on his glossy hair,
His fair and speaking features, Samor comes.
His name is on the lisping infant's lips,
Floats on the maiden's song; him warrior men
Hail with proud crest elate; him present, deem
Peace timorous mercy on the invading foe.
With him the Kings of Britain, some her shame,
Downy and silken with luxurious ease;

Others more hardy, in whose valiant looks
Were freedom and command: of princely stem
Alone were absent the forsaken King
And his sad Son, and those twin royal youths,
Emrys and Uther; nor the Mountain Lord,
With that young eaglet of his race, deigned share
The unstirring luxuries of peace; save these,
All Britain's valiance, princedom, and renown
March'd jubilant, with symphony and song.
'Tis Noon; from his empyreal throne the Sun
Floods with broad light the living plain; more rich
Ne'er blaz'd his summer couch, when sea and sky,
In royal pomp of cloudy purple and gold,
Curtain his western chambers; breathing men
Gorgeous and numberless as those bright waves
Flash, in their motion, the quick light; aloof
The banqueters, like Gods at nectar feast,
Sit sumptuous and pavilion'd; all glad tones
From trembling string, or ravishing breath or voice,
In clouds of harmony melt up to Heaven;
O'erwhelming splendour all of sight and sound,
One rich oppression of eye, ear, and mind.
'Tis Midnight: in thick darkness, heavy, chill,
In silence rigid, deep and breathless, stands
On the wide plain one lonely man. Wan light,
From dim decaying firebrand in his grasp,
Feebly, with gleam inconstant, shows his mien
Hopeless, too haughty to despair: His eye,

As watching some dark foe, is wandering round:
Yet seems he one more fear'd than fearing; rent
His robes' rich splendour; and his ponderous arm,
With its strange weapon wearily declin'd,
Bears token of rude strife—though rude, though fierce,
By thy brow's pride, thou sad and stately Man!
No faint inglorious craven hast thou shrunk,
In dread of death, or avarice base of blood.

At that dead hour, in Cæsar's city * gates
The Briton wives and mothers sate; at eve,
They from the plain had home returned, to rock
Their infants' rosy sleep, or trim the couch
For him belov'd and loving; some, from joy
Sleepless, and in no sad impatience, sate
Watching the falling shadows; slumbering some,
From weariness of pleasure, in light dreams
Liv'd o'er again the morning's jocund hours.

That hour, one horn with long and solemn blast
Went wailing up the heavens; less shrill, less drear,
Blew through the fatal Roncesvalles' pass,
In after times, Roland's deep bugle, heard
Dolorous, so poets feign, on Paris' wall.†
The air seem'd shivering where the knell pass'd on,
As with a cold wind shudder'd the thick trees.

But those fond women hail that brazen sound,
Joy's harbinger, sweet signal of return;

* Salisbury.—Sarisburga, qu. Cæsaris burga.
† From the Morgante of Pulci.

As the soft maid her lover's moonlight lute,
They drink in its dire harshness, busy round
Gazing, if aught neglected, careless aught
Belie the welcome, or to wakening child
Smile the glad tidings, or along the walls
People the dim air with the forms they love.
Oh, fond of fancy! credulous of hope!
Ye hear but music in that horn; but see,
In the dim tumult of yon moving lights,
Your husband's swift return. The slow delay
Is now a lengthen'd rapture: steps are heard,
And figures indistinct are in the gloom
Advancing; yet no festal pomp proclaim'd
By music's merry breath, but mute and slow,
As from dark funeral: haply wearied all
With the long revel day. Ye fondly trace
Some well-known gesture, dear familiar step,
Each boastful of her lover's speedier pace.
Saxon the first, how wearily slow they pass!
Still are they Saxon, Saxon still, the last
Saxon! in wonder they, not yet in fear,
Question the dark air with their searching eyes,
Incredulous arraign the deepening gloom,
That with an envious melancholy shroud
Hides the long-look'd for, late-returning. Them,
Ah, deeper darkness covers; to their homes
Ne'er to return again! Lo, all at once
The bloody knives, in every Saxon hand

Borne boastful and aloft, their sanguine light
Flash murtherous; known is all ere aught is fear'd.*
And yet are there unfaded on their brows
The crowns ye wove so gaily. From these walls,
At morn, three hundred breathing valiant men
Went proudly forth—in solitary life
Moves o'er the plain that one majestic shape,
Like Spirit of Vengeance o'er some ghastly land
That scoff'd erewhile, in high portentous guilt,
The slumbering of God's wrath; now blasted lies,
Infecting with the ashes of its wreck
The late-chastising heavens. So lone, so dark,
But pale with human sorrows at his heart,
The King of that Bright City in the Vales
Walks the waste gloom; around him the night winds
Speak voices from the dead, and oft he turns,

* "Of this kind of weapon they had two sorts, the one whereof being long were worn for swords, and the other being short, as hangers or sword-knives, and these they called hand-seaxes, and such they were which after their coming into Britain, they had still in use, and did weare privately hanging under their long skirted coates; wherewith, at a banquet on Salisbury plaine where Hengistus had envited king Vortiges, and about 300 of his nobles, the watch-word, Nem eowr seaxes, that is, take your seaxes, being given, were all of them suddenly slain."—Verstegan, Restitution of Decayed Intelligence, p. 22; see also p. 130.

"Amongst other of the Britains, there was one Edol, earle of Gloucester, (Eldulph de Samor), or (as others say) Chester, which got a stake out of an hedge or elsewhere, and with the same so defended himself, and laid about him, that he slew seventeen of the Saxons, and escaped to the town of Ambrie, now called Salisburie; and so saved his own life."—Holinshed, b. v. c. 5.

I have made Ambri, Amesbury, and Salisbury different towns.

Brandishing defiance on the air, and smites
Some seeming Saxon with his smouldering brand.
Now rests he in that old mysterious ring,
The dateless and the numberless Stonehenge,*
That is, and hath been, whence or how, none knows.
But even the Master Druid with slow dread
Its dangerous precincts trod, though noontide bright
Was revelling in the heavens, and holiest harps
Purified the calm air: like the vast wreck
Of some old world the shadowy temple rose,
Shapeless magnificence! Here souls profane
Deem'd rites so potent held, as made the oaks
Stand still and motionless 'mid the wild storm,
And with a light, nor of the stars nor moon,
Sheeted the midnight heavens: deem'd some, more sage,
Th' Invisible his cloudy presence here
Embodied, and with wisdom heavenly and high
Full feasted the tranc'd soul; all fled the place
And fear'd the more, unknowing what they fear'd.
Amid those stony giants that uptower
In massy darkness, or in the wind's rush
Seem swaying on their dizzy balance, stands,
If virtue of aught earthly may feel awe,
Awe-struck the Christian. Now his calmer soul
Has time for grief, for memory, o'er him flows

* It is said that no one has ever been able to count the stones of Stonehenge.

Deep-lulling quiet; here the light and gay
Had felt a motion on their lips like prayer,
Nor marvel then that holy thoughts oppress'd
With suppliant ecstasy the Christian soul.
" Merciful! by whose will mine arm hath pav'd
With the strewn corpses of my murderous foes
A dismal passage, while around me Death
Mow'd Britain with his secret scythe! oh God,
I thank thee, if I die, a warrior's death
May be my brave distinction: if this life
Be worthy thy upholding, though all lost,
The friendships and the prides, that made its course
Blissful and bright, I thank thee for my life:
Thank thee, that yet on British earth shall breathe
A Briton, resolute on that last crag,
That knows not the rude Saxon's tread, to rise
Erect in stately freedom, and erect
The dim yet fatal beacon of revenge.
Or deign'st thou for thy minister of wrath
To choose this humble frame, I not with prayer
Vain and presumptuous summon from the clouds
Thy thunders, nor invoke prodigious Death
To smite my foes. Hopes perishable man,
At his wild bidding, thou the laws wilt burst
Wherewith thou fetterest thy Omnipotence?
Harden to stern endurance these frail limbs,
With adamantine patience sheathe my soul,
That nor pale shrinking of the coward flesh,

Nor inward palsying turn from its brave scope
Th' aspiring spirit; grant thou this sole prayer,
And I thus lone, thus desolate, proclaim,
Single, yet dauntless, to yon Saxon host
Stubborn defiance, resolute to bear
The wreck of Britain with unstooping neck."

Now over all the orient sky, the Morn
Spread rosy in her youthful light: as fair,
As bright her rising on this plain of death,
As yesterday, when festal multitudes
Greeted her dawn; so vain the boast of man,
That earth, and air, and sky, their mimic hues
Borrow from his fantastic woes and joys.

Then o'er the plain began his lonely way
The Warrior, on his brow the unheeded wind
Fann'd freshness, and the wandering lark unheard,
Quiver'd her blithe song, like an airy voice,
Bathing in light. Anon a dale beneath
Open'd, and slow withdrew the misty veil,
That o'er her hamlets' roofs and bowery trees
Ting'd with a tranquil azure the thin air.
Along the winding path he roves, that none,
Save feet habituate to its maze, could thread,
Heedless that here to Elidure's green home
He came, unweeting visitant. Within,
Breathless, as though she listen'd in her sleep,
Close to the door, as jealous lest some ear
Earlier than her own should catch the sound

Of Elidure's returning tread, or voice
Anticipate the welcome of her own,
Reclin'd his bride, soft Evelene. That step
Up from the pillowing hand her flushing cheek
Waken'd, or ere the threshold he o'erpast,
The form yet indistinct to her quick sight,
Her fond upbraiding murmur'd. " Truant Lord,
Art thou too chang'd, thou too of midnight feast
Enamour'd? time hath been the rosy cup,
Thou Saxon in thy revels! had look'd pale
To Evelene's cheek."—'Tis wretched solace, yet
'Tis solace in the drear extreme of grief,
To find one human heart whose deeper woe
Makes weakness of our wailing. Though alone
Of the fray's dizzy tumult lay distinct
Elidure's image on the Wanderer's soul,
His image as beneath the Saxon steel
Dying, he struggled back to life from joy
To see his mightier friend with fiery brand
Piercing his path of flight; less bitter seem'd
His cup of woe, when from him sprang that bride,
Nor knew him; knew him but no Elidure.
Then sued for tidings, and with all her soul
Listen'd, but could not hear; mistrusting all
While yet but fearing, but when all assur'd,
Mistrusting even her fears, even then to hope
Clinging with desperate energy of soul.
Her Samor left in that dead night of mind,

When madness were a comfort; all wild whirl,
All dizzy hurry of rack'd sense, were bliss,
Were transport, to that blank and dismal void,
When one incessant miserable thought
Becomes the life, the being of the spirit.
Him scared no Saxon clarion, the drear blast
Winding of fleet pursuit; his soul recalled
His own, his wedded Emeric, her babes
Hushing, while greedily with ear and heart
She drinks each sound, that busy babbling fame
Spreads on the wandering winds; the fleetest steed
Of Elidure bestriding, still he moves
A tardy laggard to his soul's desire.
Sedulous each throng'd haunt of man he shuns
With jealous speed, and still from town and tower
Came blithely forth the jubilant hymns of peace;
Still unextinguish'd their glad brilliance, wan'd
In morn's grey mists the yellow festal fires.
Day pass'd, day sank; 'tis now the dewy eve.
Beneath him, in the soft and silent light,
Spread the fair Valleys; mead and flowery lawn,
With their calm verdure interspers'd, allay
The forest's ponderous blackness, or retire
Under the chequering umbrage of dim groves,
Whose shadows almost slumber: far beyond
Huge mountains, brightening in their secret glens,
Bathe their cold peaks in the red setting sun.
Sweeps through the midst broad Severn, deep and dark

His monarchy of waters, their full flow
Still widening, as he scorn'd to bear the main
Less tribute than a sea; or inland roll'd
Ambitious ocean, of his tide to claim
The wealthy vassalage. High on their marge
Shone the Bright City, in her Roman pomp,
Of bath, and theatre, and basilic,
Smooth swelling dome, and spiring obelisk,
Glittering like those more soft and sunny towns,
That bask beneath the azure southern skies
In marble majesty. Silent she stands
In the rich quiet of the golden light.
The banner on her walls its cumbrous folds
Droops motionless. But Samor turn'd aloof,
Where lordly his fair dwelling's long arcade
On its white shafts the tremulous glittering light
Cherish'd, and, starry with the river dews,
Its mantle of gay flowers the odorous lawn
Down sloped, as in the limpid stream to bathe.
No watch-dog, with glad bark and fawning joy,
His Lord saluted. Samor mark'd it not.
No menial caught the slack rein from his hand,
He heeded not. No swift familiar step
Forth started at his coming; face of joy
Brightened not—vacant all; yet heeds he not.
No infants, in their giddy tottering speed,
Cling round his knees. So early at their rest,
Thought the fond father. Emeric's chamber door

Stands open; he but paused his name to hear
Low mingled with her murmur'd orisons.
All hush'd as in a tomb; perchance she sleeps,
At his long absence heartsick. He the folds
Gently withdrawing of his nuptial bed,
As with the amorous violence of his lips
To wake her to delicious fear, bends down.
Cold, cold as marble, the forsaken bed
Received the fervent pressure. Back he sprung,
And strange, like one that moveth in his sleep,
Stood with loose arms and leaden listless gaze.
Unconscious, to the city walls, far seen
From that high chamber, rove his eyes: behold
Against the Sun's last light a wandering breeze
Swells up the heavy banner; in the gleam
The White Horse of the Saxon shakes his mane.
Then felt he the blank silence, then perceiv'd
The tumult, and rude disarray that marr'd
The face of his fair dwelling. Forth he rush'd,
As eager that his soul at one wild draught
Might glut itself with perfect woe, all ill
Exhausted, laugh all future griefs to scorn.
Cradle and infant's couch with frantic hand
Hurrying he explores; the sad chill void
Almost delights. Now on the river brink
He watches yon huge forms that pace the walls,
Saxon their long black lances, Saxon helms
Nod o'er their lofty brows' terrific gloom.

Lo! at his feet, beneath a primrose bank,
Half veil'd, and branching alder that o'er-droop'd
Its dark green canopy, a slumbering child—
If slumber might be call'd, that but o'erspread
A wan disquiet o'er the wither'd cheek;
Choked the thin breath that through the pallid lips
Scarce struggled; clos'd not the soft sunken eye.
Well Samor knew her, of his love first pledge,
First, playfullest, and gentlest: he but late
Luxurious in the fulness of his woe,
Clings to this last hope like a drowning man,
Not yet, not yet in this rude world alone.
Lavish of fond officious zeal, he bathes
With water from the stream her marble brow,
Chafes her; and with his own warm breath recals
The wandering life, that like a waning lamp
Glimmer'd anon, then faded: but when slow
Unfix'd her cold unmeaning eye regain'd
Brief consciousness, powerless her languid arm
Down fell again, half lifted in his hair
To wreathe as it was wont, with effort faint
Her harden'd features sadly strove to smile.
The half-formed murmurs of her lips began
Intelligible to his ear alone.
"And thou art come—too late—yet thou art come,"—
He, soothing her with hope he knew most false,
Slow modell'd from her broken faltering voice
One sad continuous story.—"'Twas at eve

We went to rest, I never slept so soft;
Our mother lull'd us with assurance sweet
Of thy returning.—By and by I woke,
But the bright morning was not shining fair,
Nor the birds singing as they us'd. I saw,
By a dim dusky light, huge iron men
With hair like fire, and their fierce voices spake
Strange language: of my prayers I thought, and strove
My eyes to close, still those grim-visag'd men
Stood in the wavering darkness, by the light
Of their blue weapons—then they went away.
I crept out to my mother's couch; she lay
Asleep, but not as I have seen her sleep,
When I have stol'n at morn to look on her,
And thou hast laid me by her quiet side.
She shiver'd in her sleeping, and her skin
Was chilly to the touch, yet, oh! I long'd
To sleep like her—for those fierce shapes came back.
Before their rugged faces I felt cold
As in the snow time; my eyes could not see,
Oh, but I heard a dizzy sound, like shrieks
Of many voices all at once. I thought
Rude hands were busy on my mother's couch,
As though to bear her thence—yet woke she not.
Oh Father, I have never looked on death,
But she was dead, I felt that she was dead.
I could not breathe, yet from my thirsty throat
My voice was bursting, then down o'er me fell

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The foldings of the couch—long, long it seem'd,
Ere from that cumbrous weight I struggled forth.
Then all was silent, all except the dash
Of distant oars; I cried aloud, and heard
But my own voice, I search'd, yet found I none;
Not one in all these wide and lofty halls,
My mother, my sweet brothers gone, all gone.
Almost I wish'd those fierce men might return
To bear me too in their dread arms away.
Hither I wander'd, for the river's sound
Was sweeter than the silence that came cold
Over my bosom, since the Sun hath shone,
Yet it seem'd dark—but oh, 'tis darker now,
Darker, my Father, all within cold, cold.
The soft warmth of thy lips no more can reach
This shuddering in my breast—yet kiss me still."

Vain, all in vain, that languid neck no more
Rises to meet his fondness, that pale hand
Drops from his shoulder, that wooed voice hath spent
Its last of sweetness; this alone remain'd
That could enhance his agony, baffled hope.

Quiet and cool the deep tide at his feet
Rolls with a tranquil murmur; one lone gleam
Still lingering from the sunken Sun, beneath
The moving surface, lightens its cold depth.
How pleasant in its secret caves to quench
The soul, the body's fever; to cast off
This restless, trembling consciousness, that clings

Enamour'd to its anguish, sedulous
To nurse its own disquiet: not to feel,
Though cast by wandering waves on Emeric's grave;
Though Saxon barks triumphant bound above,
To feel not, and have freedom though in death.
For why this barren wilderness of earth
Still haunt, man's pity, and the enemy's scoff;
Why to the wearying wretchedness of life
Cling with a coward fondness?—but a step
To quiet—to forgetfulness, a step.

But alien to proud Samor those base thoughts
Startled his nature; his soul burned with shame,
That such unholy musings dare intrude
On its sad sanctity; upright he sprung;
Oh, not in vain a Christian, with clench'd hand
And inward rack convulsive of choked pain,
Fore'd calmness to his brow: his hollow voice
Assumed a mournful fortitude.—"Oh thou,
Glorious in thy prosperity of crime,
Hengist! and thou, that barter'st thy old fame
For sweet lascivious chambering, hast unking'd
Thy stately soul within the wreathing arms
Of that fair Saxon, in loose dalliance soft
To steep the inebriate sense! on Samor's state
Look, and be pale with envy; he dare stand
Lofty beneath yon starry throne of God,
And bless him that his fate is scant and poor
In joys like yours, by all your pomp, your bliss,
Enamour'd of his misery; still he feels

The haughty solace of disdain; still soothes
The madness of his grief by pitying you.
Nor yet, oh impotent of cruelty!
I am not utterly from this dark world
Estrang'd and outcast: gone, for ever gone,
Those exquisite delights of purest hearts,
That summer sunshine of the soul, sweet love,
That makes life what we dream of heaven; yet still
Hardier, severer joys remain. Oh reft
Of all thy brave, thy princely, of my faith,
Thou hast a stronger need—be thou my bride,
Oh Britain, to thy wreck I proudly wed
The sadness of my widowhood, and bid
Pale bridemaids to our nuptials, holy Wrath
And sacred Retribution; I invoke
Death, that dark minstrel from expiring mounds
Of Saxons, to awake our bridal hymn;
And spread for torch light on our spousal eve
Wild gratulation of their funeral fires.
"And thou, oh stainless denizen of heaven,
Soft soul of my lost Emeric, endure
Though jealous my new bride bereave thee still
Of the tumultuous day, the midnight hour
I consecrate to thee; then glide thou down,
Like moonlight on the darkness' raven wing.
And oh, if human passion, human love,
Stain the pure essence of immortal spirits,
Leave heaven in heaven; earth's frailer loveliness
Resuming, chaste mild fondness, timorous warmth,

Visit my desert fancy. Him by day,
Savage and merciless, with soul of steel,
And pale brow clouded with a nation's cares,
Shall midnight find an amorous dreamer fond,
A dotard on a dim unreal shade."
Then o'er what was so rosy, playful, warm,
Now pale, now changeless, icy cold, the girl
Whose blue eyes danc'd with rapture, whose light step
Was consort to the air-roving winds, yet loath
To part from what he shudder'd to behold,
Heaps Samor the light earth; ere o'er her face
He placed the primrose knot, once stooped his lips,
And started to find cold, what he knew dead.
Now closed that mournful office, nearing fast
Is heard a dash of oars, and at his side
Forth leap'd an armèd Saxon, with rais'd arm
Menacing; but Samor down with scornful strength
The grim intruder dash'd to earth, and fix'd
His stern heel on his neck, and stood in act
The life to trample from the gasping trunk.
Sudden withdrawn his angry tread, he spake,
"Thee first of Saxon race, thee last, this arm
Spares, not of mercy, but as meet to serve
My soul's all-righteous purpose; go unscath'd,
And tell to Hengist, tell thy Lord, who robs
The Lion's den, should chain the Lion first;
Add, Samor is abroad."—Then to the boat
He sprang, and pass'd to Severn's western shore.

BOOK VI.

ARGUMENT.

The Voice heard throughout Britain. Submission of Britain. The Unknown. The Avenger. His exploits related in a Banquet of the Saxons. Offa the Jute. Abisa, the Brother of Hengist. His Slave and Mistress, Myfanwy. Combat of Abisa with the Avenger. Morning. The Camp. Myfanwy sets forth to seek the body of Abisa. Offa. The Avenger.

A VOICE o'er all the waste and prostrate isle
Is heard, an awful voice; the hill, the dale,
Forest and mountain, heath and ocean shore
Treasure its mystic murmurs; all the winds
From the bleak moody East to that soft gale
That wantons with the summer's dewy flowers,
Familiar its dark burthen waft abroad.
Is it an utterance of the earth? a sound
From the green barrows of the ancient dead?
Doth fierce Cassivelan's cold sleep disdain
That less than Cæsar with a master's step
Walk his free Britain? Doth thy restless grave,

Bonduca, to the slavish air burst ope,
And thou, amid the laggard cars of war,
Cry, "Harness and away!" But far and wide,
As when from marish dank, or quaking fen,
Venomous and vast the mists uproll, and spread
Pale pestilence along the withering land:
So sweeps o'er all the isle his wasting bands
The conqueror Saxon; he, far worse, far worse
His drear contagion; that the body's strength
Wastes, and with feverish pallor overlays
The heaven-shap'd features; this the nobler soul
With slavery's base sickliness attaints.
Thames rolls a Saxon tide; in vain delays
Deep Severn on Plinlimmon's summits rude
His narrow freedom, tame anon endures
Saxon dominion: high with arms uplift,
As though he march'd o'er necks of prostrate kings,
Caswallon, on the southern shore of Trent,
Drives onward, he nought deeming won, while aught
Remains unwon. But still that wonderous voice,
Like vulture in the grisly wake of war,
Hovers, and flings on air its descant strange,
"Vengeance and Vigilance!"—in van, in rear,
Around, above, beneath, the clouds of Heaven
Enshroud it in their misty folds; earth speaks
From all her caves, "Vengeance and Vigilance!"
Aye, at that sound the Briton crest assumes
High courage and heroic shame; he wears

With such bold mien his slavery, he might seem
Lord over fortune, and with calm disdain
Clashes his fetters, like proud battle arms.
Without a foe o'er this wide land of foes
The Saxon marches. City, tower, and fort
On their harsh hinge roll back their summon'd gates,
But with such sullen and reluctant jar,
Submission seems defiance. Though to fear
Impassive, scarce the Victor dares unfurl
Banner of conquest on the jealous air.
Less perilous were frantic strife, were wrath
Desperate of life, and blind to death, or hate,
Of being struck all heedless, so it strike,
Than this high haughty misery, baffling still
Fierce woe by brave endurance; which confronts
With cold and stern contentedness all ill,
Outrage, and insult, ravage, rape, and wreck,
That dog barbaric Conqueror's march of war.
'Tis like the sultry silence, ushering forth
The thunder's cloudy chariot; rather like
The murky smothering of volcanic fire
Within its rocky prison; forth anon
Bursts the red captive, to the lurid heaven
Leaps up, and with its surging dome of smoke
Shuts from the pale world the meridian Sun.
But in their camp, in fierce divan and full,
The lordly robbers sate, assemblage proud,
Ethling, and Erle, and King, for council met,

For council and carousal; * so they deem'd
The drunken sense would hardier deeds resolve;
And the bold revel of the blood enflame
The soul to nobler valour, strong desire
In fierce embrace to meet that mistress dark,
Danger. Hoarse din of merriment around
Rose, with meet music blending loud and deep.
But Horsa, kindling with disdainful mirth
His broad bright eye, 'gan scoff with rugged jest.
"Ill have we done, though for one sumptuous feast
This spacious isle be ours, ill have we done;—
That in our prodigal and heedless waste
Of those tall high-born Britons spared we none
To tilt at with our idle spears, and scare
The frost and slumber from our sluggish hearts.
Now hang we up our banners to disport
In the smooth breeze, our armour's steeled clasps
To summons soft of Lady's tender hands
Surrender; or go joust the hardy oaks
For pastime. Oh, along these velvet plains
To prance 'mid timorous hinds with their pale souls
In their white faces, heralds crouching low,
With looks beseeching, voices meek, clasp'd hands:
'Tis tame and wearisome as at dead noon
To rock upon the flat and hazy sea."

* De pace denique ac bello plerumque in conviviis consultant; tanquam nullo magis tempore aut ad simplices cogitationes pateat animus, aut ad magnas incalescat. Tac. Germ.

"This too," cried hoary Cerdic; this bright sword
Loathes its long Christian fast, yet not despairs
Erewhile to glut with banquet rich and full
Its ravening blade; for trust me, fiery Erle,
Many a fierce steed hath brook'd the brazen curb,
That chaf'd anon, from his high seat to dust
Hath shaken his bold rider; Erle, I read
In yon bow'd foreheads sterner characters
Than abject, tame allegiance, homage base:
There the firm purpose, meditation deep,
And study of revenge."—A bitter laugh
Came with the fierce reply, "Shall Horsa watch
The shifting in the visage of a slave;
I issue forth my mandate, and 'tis done,
Whether with cloudy or with sunshine brow
I know not and regard not."—Cerdic's voice,
Ruffled to somewhat of prophetic tone:
"Not, Horsa, to the stones, the deaf dull stones,
Nor the cold current of the senseless winds
Speaks that wild orator, the Man, whose paths
Are hidden as the ways of fate; unknown
Who knoweth all, who seeth all unseen;
Nor, like the lightning's shaft, his presence dread
Divulges, but to shatter, but to slay.
Whose breath beneath the soft dove's snowy down
Might breathe a soul of power to soar above
The falcon's pitch of pride. I tell thee, Erle,
This soft effeminate Britain to our sway

Gentle and pliant as a willow wand,
Will that dark Man uprear a ponderous Mace
To crush our infant empire."—"Man! hath man
Curdled the blood of Offa?" cried aloud
A wrathful voice, "and made his dauntless soul
Patient of base and pale and trembling fear?
And Offa lives, lives shameless of his shame,
Amid his peers with unblench'd front to say,
These knees have quail'd, these stubborn joints have felt
The aspen's coward fluttering, and the Sun
That saw his flight, hath seen not his revenge.
Cerdic, the name of perishable man
Thou dost belie, so titling beings dim;
Viewless and formless denizens of air,
That sport and dally with the human shape,
Themselves to death impregnable. We swore,
Gurmund and Sigvart, Ælla, Attilar,
And other six, than whose no German arm
Sways heavier the long lance, nor German foot
Treads firmer battle's crimson paths,—I speak,
Fiery-soul'd Horsa, to thy front; to thine,
High-sceptred Hengist! mortal steel we swore
Should choke that daring Wanderer's clamorous breath.
Sage oath! as to adjure our souls, and vow
Th' irregular mad ocean our word 'Peace'
Should hearken, and abase his cresting waves.
But gaily went we forth with brand and bow,
Like hunters to the chase, scoffing our prey.

'Now if he meet us in his mortal shape,
Let him melt back into his native air;
Then shall he 'scape'—high o'er our path a rock
Hung beetling, from its summit came a voice,
'Behold him!'—with the voice a fragment vast,
An earthquake scarce had rent it from its base.
Two stately necks to the low earth sank down,
And o'er them that huge mass lay stern and still,
Like an old giant's monument. But we
Leap'd onward, Ælla met the dark unknown,
Heavy with ruin hung his arm in air,
But in his valiant heart a javelin stood,
Drinking the crimson life. Still on we swept,
Many a wild league o'er moor and marish swamp,
Forest and wold, and still our pathway lay
O'er the warm corpses of our foremost peers.
The sole survivors of our host, we came,
Sigvart and Offa; on the giddy brink
Of precipice abrupt the Conqueror paus'd,
As weary with his prowess, our defeat,
To mock us with the calmness of his rest.
'Now come what will,' cried Sigvart, 'come what may,
Or thou, or I, or both.'—Then on he sprung:
Yet not the more relax'd that shape of gloom
Its stern contemptuous quiet, his arm wav'd
With motion less of strife than proud command,
And then of Sigvart's fall the deep abyss
Sent up a hollow sound. I fled, proud Peers,

I say again, I fled; and, or disdain'd
That being dark a lone and single foe,
Or by the shielding of our mightier gods,
I 'scap'd."—"I too (cried Hermingard), I too
Of that mysterious Wanderer have known
The might and insolent mercy. I had stray'd
Into a fabric fair, it seem'd a fane
Of Christian gods, rich-crested pillars rang'd
On either side, above the hollow roof,
Aye lessening, seem'd to melt into the air
On which it floated.—High uprear'd there shone
An altar, bright with chalice, lamp, and cup,
All of the flaming gold. I rush'd to seize,
An arm was on my neck, that dash'd me down
Like a soft infant; then a vengeful voice
Struck on my dizzy ears.—'But that thy blood
Would dye this holy pavement with foul stain,
Heathen! thy soul and mortal shape were rent
Asunder.'—As I fled, I turn'd—reclin'd
Low by that altar on his knees, all quench'd
Fierce wrath and fiery menace, drooping all
Stern pride of mastery, triumph, and high scorn,
That wild Unknown, calm, not with weariness;
Gentle, but not with sleep. Majestic light
Beam'd on the quiet of his heavenward brow,
Yet human tears stood glittering in his eyes.
My thoughts were vengeance, but the cold clear air
Went creeping up my veins, an awful frost

Drank up the languid current of my blood,
And unrevenged I fled that tranquil Man."
Up sprang young Alisa, and beauteous scorn
Curl'd his smooth cheek—"in tumult or in calm;
But have he blood within his beating veins,
Mine is a steel of such a searching thirst,
'Twill drain its crimson source."—"Thou! wanton boy."
"Thou! thou! (cried Offa) with thy mother's milk
Yet white within thy beardless cheek."—"Proud Jute,
The stem of Woden is a mounting tree,
Its saplings soar to meet the golden Sun,
While tamer shrubs creep with base trail on earth.
Hengist, my King, my Brother! by our Sire
I swear, that ne'er again metheglin cup
Shall sparkle on these lips, till I have met
This mystic deity of Offa's fear."
Then on the Monarch turn'd all eyes; he sate
In darkness, or by chance, or art, the lamps
Stream'd bright and yellow down the festal board,
But fell no ray within his folded robe.
Yet wore not Hengist on his brow his soul,
High spake he from its cold and stately calm,
Law to the lawless, to the dauntless dread;
But his were rarer qualities of power,
Dominion o'er himself; deep, deep within
Dwelt all the stormy passions; by no eye
Pierc'd in its dark abiding, lay the spirit
With all its secret family of lusts.

Though now there seem'd beneath his royal crown
A faint uncertain paleness, as of fear
Not wholly quell'd, and on his cheek and lip
Hover'd a quivering motion, ere he spake,
But cool his speech.—"Presumptuous youth, thy oath,
Though wild, is holy—Woden guard thee well!
Yet stand'st thou forth alone? the time hath been
When the brave frenzy of rash daring spread,
A broad contagious flame, through all our camp,
Till scarce a sword endured its sluggish sheath.
Nor needed Saxon king, as now, to gild
Fair danger ere it pleas'd, as now, proclaim
Rich guerdon to the warrior, who aspires
To rival Woden's blood, and be the peer
Of Abisa in peril and renown.
More lofty duties fetter thee and me,
High Horsa"—(for the fiery warrior's hand
Had started to his sword's familiar hilt)
Rob we not of their fame the valiant Erles."
No seat was vacant—not a voice was heard—
As he were single in his shame, sate each,
Nor dared on his compeers to look, in fear
Soul might be there more dauntless than his own.
Blank silence all! but loud that silence spake,
Samor! not undeserved thy title proud,
Avenger! by thy country's Conquerors thou
Magnificently deified; so soar'd
Thy mortal virtue o'er their tamer Gods.

Not that the vassal elements thy sway
Obey'd, nor beings of the middle air
Stoop'd on their glistening wings to work thy will;
Avenger! but for thee, the Almighty wrought
Most marv'lous, most mirac'lous; in thy soul,
That nobler field, high wonders manifold
Labour'd to light and lustre: for what thought,
Unwing'd by inbreath'd Godhead, e'er might dream
Of glory to be born from this broad night
Of desolation and deep darkness, strive
For faint impalpable, and distant good,
Through the thick clouds of evil and of woe,
Strong, stately, constant, like an eagle set
To drink the last light of the parting sun?
What heart of earthly clay, that near imbib'd
Holier and purer ether, might endure
Danger, dismay, despair, all ills, that wring
Man's inmost spirit with anguish? not alone
Fierce wrong and insult of triumphant foe,
But worse, far worse, from those our friends misdeem'd,
Pity of calm, cold cowards, or rude scorn
From sleek and smiling slaves; or scoff and mock
At our hard sufferings from those ingrate hearts
For whom we suffer. But thou still didst strive,
Didst still endure, and hope against all hope:
And therefore in thy dark and silent deeds
Beam'd manifest God's Spirit; till in thee
Even the base body that for ever clouds

The nobler energies, its state infirm
Shook off, and by communion close assum'd
The soul's immortal essence; or the soul
A climate and peculiar atmosphere
Spread round its weaker instrument of power.
Hence human accidents of heat and cold,
Famine and thirst, wasting and weariness,
Unharming fell upon thy tranquil frame,
Like flakes of snow upon th' unbroken lake;
Thus didst thou pass most fearless, and most fear'd;
By virtue, and thy foeman's dread, array'd
In attributes of strong divinity;
Danger became thy safety, thy renown
Grew from thy utter desperate wretchedness.
But now the more that Saxon youth enjoy'd
His solitude of glory; forth he springs
Hasty, lest valorous repentance fire
Some rival Erle of half his peril yet
To wrong him. In his tent, soft languid sounds
Expiring on her falling lute, arose
To welcome home her Lord his beauteous slave;
His slave! is that her slavery, round his neck
The snowy girdle of her arms to wreathe?
To catch a master's mandate doth she raise
The bashful fringes of her eyes, and meet
Those glances of no lordly scorn, that soothe
Her gentle wayward angriness of love,
Soothe, dare not chide, that coldness faint and brief

That would be wooed, but sweeter to be won?
Nor dares not she withhold that arm, uprais'd
From their high stand the furniture of fight,
Glaive, corslet, morion, to displace; her touch
Now clings with soft resistance, playful now
Thwarts his stern purpose.—"Oh, remove not them;
In hours of absence thou too dearly lov'st,
They are my comfort, my companions they,
My all but thou: the dusky shades of eve
Brown o'er their radiance steal, and there array
A bright and armed man, th' officious air
Gives motion, and with all thy graceful pride
Shakes the light plumage; thou art there, in spite
Of thy own tardy lingering, thou art there.
Oh, I have woke at midnight, when my soul
With thee hath been a wanderer through sad fields,
'Mid death and battle, though my lightest touch
Had prov'd thee by my side, my timorous hand
Lack'd courage with that dangerous proof to front
My unsubstantial fears. Oh then, if light
Of star or moon on their blue surface gleam'd,
Or wind awoke them into sound, again
Calm on my pillow droop'd my cheek to rest,
Secure to find thee sweetly slumbering there.
Yet, yet unwon, oh, lighten that cold brow,
And I will sing the soft and sleepy song
That makes a woman's of thy angry eyes,
Lulls the rude tumult in thy troubled breast,

Leaving nought there but melody and me."
Then started she to feel how hard and cold
Between her and her bosom's resting place
The corslet lay, by stealth her fond embrace
Supplanting; gently his one arm declin'd
Over her neck, in careless fondness hangs,
Busy the other, its rude task performs,
Linking the breastplate's clasps; now holds he back
From her approaching lips his cheek, to fix
The weighty morion; but her garrulous grief
Paus'd not—"At midnight! now! oh brave misdeem'd,
Misdeem'd, who but the open day would front
With his bold armour; who save I would love,
I, weak and brainsick, one whose valour shrouds
Its prowess in the cloudy gloom of night?
Oh not, oh not to war, thou goest to win
Some lovelier or some newer bride. Go, go,
Though faithless, barbarous, cruel, cold to me,
Yet make not her too wretched, make not her
Heartsick with sad expectance."—But her arms
Belied her desperate language, closer clasp'd
With more than maiden strength.—"Oh, stony heart!
And I for thee forsook my infant home,
Where all my steps were music, all my smiles
Glad sunshine to my parents' wintry blood,
That glanc'd like summer waters at my sight:
For thee did violence to my virgin fame:
By war's rude force might I have seem'd enthrall'd.

A luckless, pitied damsel; my fond heart
Ill brook'd the coarse reproach of ravisher
Should couple with a name so dear as thine.
At night-fall fled I to thee; even as now
The stars shone beauteous, and a kindly gloom
Curtain'd our meeting even as now; no change
From soft and fond and tender, but in thee."—
"Peace, trembler, peace! to-morrow's dawn shall hail,
Borne in the shield of honour, on the necks
Of his tall peers, thy Abisa; no voice
Silent, no quiet in the troubled air,
Restless with his hymn'd triumph, Offa's heart
Sick with wan envy. Then Myfanwy,* then
My glory shall make rapture of thy tears,
And thou shalt bless the grief that wrings thee now."-
"Oh, glory hath a stern and savage mate,
Danger, her lawless paramour, enfolds
Her beauties in his churlish arms. Oh pause,
And yet farewell—'tis exquisite to part,
For oh, thou weep'st at parting—'twas past hope
To see a tear on that stern face for me."
She hath her last cold kiss, through the barr'd helm
Won hardly; she is calm as though it dwelt
Yet on her lips, she hears his parting steps,
Yet lingers on her cheek that liquid glow,

* I borrowed this name from the Welsh poetry. Myfanwy was the celebrated mistress of one of the bards; the Laura of an ancient British Petrarch.

That brilliant harmony of smile and tear
That at the presence of the one belov'd
Flits o'er the settled purple of the cheek.
Oh, if soft woman hath her wilder fears,
She hath her wilder hopes, for man's stern grasp
Too thin, too airy! "Never yet found false,
Thou wilt return; (so prophesied her dreams)
So young, so lovely, fate scarce dare cut off,
Untimely thus, the noblest boast of earth."
Then sate she down triumphal coronets
To weave, but not in modest quiet grief,
And gentle resignation pale and mild,
But with a dancing heart and bright blithe eye;
And when her eyelids droop'd, soft o'er her came
A sweet inconstant slumber, such as sleep
Love-dreaming maidens ere their bridal morn.
But through the clear calm night (the azure plain
Of heaven, with all its glittering paths of light
Distinct and dazzling) mov'd that fair-hair'd youth;
So, if old fable may be won to smile
Its grace upon our darker tale, the boy,
Smooth-cheek'd Endymion, his enamour'd Moon
Woo'd with no lawless witchcraft from her sphere:
Nor she delay'd; her silver-sandal'd feet
Gliding and glancing o'er the dews she came,
And curtain'd in a cloud of snowy light,
Mock'd mortal harps that hymn'd her cold and chaste.
No amorous fancies o'er thy downless cheek

Flushing their rosy heat, no love-lipp'd tones
In sweet disturbance stealing on the air,
Young Abisa! with more imperious charm
Thou summon'st from wild wood or cavern'd heath,
Nor vainly, their fierce habitant. Behold,
A shadow by thine own, its stately length
On the white dews advancing; at thy side
The Avenger, as upsprung from nether earth.
Then fatal gladness leap'd in that young heart,
He flung his vizor'd helmet sternly up,
Proud to defy fierce Offa's conqueror.
But Samor, for when his pure heart was wean'd
From all the weakness of his mortal kind,
The mercies clung within, and gentleness
So mingled with his nature, that it slaked
Even the blood-thirsting frenzy of revenge;
Samor survey'd that beauteous youth, the stars
Glimmer'd with blue and hazy light, that shewed
His soft locks spreading their bright clusters wide,
His vermeil cheek most lovely in its wrath,
And brow that seem'd to wonder and delight
At its own dauntlessness. So tall, so fair,
Oft had he imag'd his own perish'd boy
In flower of youth, that flower which never bloom'd.
Tender and mild his voice, as though he spake
Even to that dead belov'd—"Oh, brave and fair,
Why thus abroad amid the silent night,
With menace and fierce gesture wild and strange?"—

"Thou heardst my call, thou see'st my arms, my aim,
Idly thou question'st."—"'Tis not, gentle youth,
Thy golden luxury of hair, nor cheek
Warm in the rosy wantonness of youth,
But thy brave bearing, gallant mien and proud,
That winds long-banish'd mercy round my sword,
To save from it one Saxon life."—"Soft praise,
And sweet from lady's lips! but not to hear
Smooth Flattery's descant come I, but to win
What, being won, is in its lofty self
Imperishable beauty, crowns the youth
With honour passing the white hairs of age,
Glory, the life of life."—"And is there none
Whose pillow dreams of thee are haunting now?
No mother, whose last waking thought was hope,
At morn to meet thee in thy wonted glow
Of loveliness and life? No gentle maid
Whom the bare thought of paleness in thy cheek,
Of death's wan chill upon thy brow, would waste
And wither like the canker'd flower of spring?
Return to her, oh fair, high-minded youth!
Ere yet too late, return."—But more delay
The hot youth brook'd not; down he clasp'd his helm,
And leaping to the frantic onset, cried,
"Now, Offa, for thy shame, and for thy meed,
My brother Hengist!"—As when lightning flame
Dashes at midnight o'er his slumbering lids,
Up starts the wild steed, all his tawny mane

Bristling and blazing, he devours the earth
In fury; even so sudden those rash words
Set flames upon the Avenger's brow, set wrath
On the impetuous motion of his spear.

Oh, holy Night! in thy injurious gloom
How blank the proud distinctions of man's fame!
Languor and loftiness, and shame and pride,
In one dead darkness, deep forgetfulness,
Lie, as within a grave, till Virtue's self,
But for her haughty consciousness within,
Might weary of her mute and viewless deeds.
Secret and still! that I might violate
Thy mysteries, and redeem from envious gloom
That Saxon boy's dead honours, dearly won,
Most dearly, yet most nobly. Morn shall tell
The issue of that conflict, but no morn
Will dawn upon his silent, perish'd praise.

Two hours are past, alone the Avenger moves
Under the stars of heaven; 'tis midnight deep:
Now comes his hour of softness; love-sick boy,
Tuning soft frenzies to his wanton lute,
Is not more wild, fantastical, or fond,
Than Britain's stately hope, high Hengist's dread.
For, ever at this hour, of parted joy
Dim gleams revisit his forsaken soul,
Like once-lov'd music o'er a maniac's ear,
Faintly and feebly sweet: the dead put on
Their earthly lustre; Emeric comes, as fair

As from the bridal altar, but less coy,
In fervent full abandonment of love.
The breezes are melodious with her voice,
The dews are printed by her slender feet,
She flows into his arms, her fond embrace
Is warm upon his soul. Thus aye she comes.
Or when 'tis wintry in the starless skies,
Or when the moonlight bathes the earth, to her
Heaven opes its crystal portals, beauteous light
Ushers her presence, sleep can ne'er estrange
That luxury from his heart; when consciousness
Of all things earthly slumbereth and is dead,
She haunts within, her sweet intrusion clings
To the lull'd spirit, senseless but to her,
All, all that liveth of the man is her's.
Oh, in their dreamings, their communions wild
With airy, immaterial visitants,
Most differ Guilt and Virtue; there are shapes
Hideous and hateful, snaky Gorgon smiles,
And all the fabled populace of hell,
Brooding disquiet o'er the thorny couch.
But Virtue's visions are almost as fair
As angels' blest realities. To thee
Lovely thy nightly visitant, sad Chief!
As to man, sinless yet in Eden bowers,
On beds of odorous amaranth asleep,
Yet uncreated, came his virgin bride,
Delightful phantom; then his fresh pure soul

Amorous enchantment first entranc'd; first rose
That our best feeling, of lost Paradise
That sole surviving pleasure, holy love.
Beauteous thy blue uprising, mist-rob'd Morn!
All thy bright glittering of fantastic dews
With their thin tissue silkening the green meads,
And all thy music of blithe leaves that dance
In the caressing breeze, and matins gay
From all the living woodland, Sleep is pleas'd
To be so sweetly banish'd her soft reign.
But dreary are thy sounds, and sad thy light
On the lewd wassail, riot's orgies rude,
Polluting day with sights that shame dark night.
Now from the state pavilion forth are pour'd
The synod of high banqueters, their eyes
Hot with loose raptures and distemper'd joy,
Voluptuously turbulent their souls.
Right in their way stood fix'd a lofty spear,
Not with gay garland crown'd, or streaming silk,
But with that beauteous head that yesternight
Confronted them with graceful pride; the cheek
Where wantonly youth's freshest purple gleam'd
Pale, dewy, stiffening, lifeless, lustreless;
Part matted with red damp, the golden locks
Clung round the spear, part curling on the air,
Sad semblance shew'd of life, in all the rest
Making the stillness and fix'd cold more dread.
No cheek was there so bright, voluptuous heart

So hot, but, like bleak snow, fear fell on it
With chill and searching numbness; if their sight
Had yet perception, humbler chiefs might draw
From high example comfort for their dread;
Brow might they see with kingly crown beset
White, sad, and shrunken as their own. Alone,
Fierce smil'd the pride of Offa; he held up
To those wan lips the sparkling shell of mead:
"Drink, thou hast kept thy oath, drink, soft-lipp'd boy!"
O'er all the camp spread loud and wide and far
The name of Abisa; Myfanwy heard
Where lay she dreaming half, and fabling half
Of garlands and of gay triumphal pomp.
How nimble are the feet that bear light hearts!
She is gone forth, and all for joy forgot
The veil e'er wont to dim her dazzling cheek,
Forgot the braiding of her hair, the maid
So soft, so timorous, at the wanton breeze
She us'd to tremble, 'neath day's eye to shrink
Even from the fondness of her own loved youth.
Through files of warriors, who uncasque their brows
To fill their curious gaze, she hurries on,
She knows not what she sees, and only knows,
She sees not what she seeks, that cheek, that eye
Which fed on her with such excess of love
As if 'twere worse than blindness to lose sight
Of its sole idol; only she is blithe,
She only smiling 'mid those many sad.

She meets even all she longs for; up from earth
(For now from that sad eminence of scorn
Had friendly hand remov'd it, now had cleans'd
Its damp defilement) that dear face on her
Settled its fixed and inexpressive gaze.
Her mien was strangely rational, her look
Like one that calmly ponder'd what it saw,
Her voice articulate and passionless.
"Who hath done this?"—"The Avenger, the Unknown,"
Spake many voices.—"Oh, my hands are weak,
Ye see them soft and delicate and white,
But thou, and thou, and thou, art bold and strong,
And bear'st bright armour, ye will sure requite
The slaughter on the slaughterer's head."—Ensued
Brief moments of a stagnant grief, life paus'd,
As 'twould prolong unconsciousness, delay
Yet, yet that state that wakes with waking sense.
Then kindled up her eye, but not with joy,
Then flush'd her cheek a light and sanguine red,
That colour'd its pure marble, leaving there
Nor tinge nor warmth; she snatch'd up to her heart
That lifeless thing and fled. As the fond bird
With spread wings hovering o'er her nest, looks round
At some terrific shape, then turns to see
If yet her callow brood are slumbering safe.
So wandering her dim eye on all around,
Anon with full intensity of love,
Settled on her cold care. She reach'd the tent

There miserly her treasure she o'erbroods;
She lays it on her lap, and sings to it;
Now gazes, as she thought even yet those eyes
Might open, those wan lips their wonted sounds
Murmur, now almost sees a forming smile:
Now gaily carols on her broken songs,
Ever his favourite, most familiar tones;
And now breaks off, as fearful to disturb
His quiet slumbers; only speaks in smiles,
Language by him e'er understood; and once,
Once her rash lips approach'd. So pass'd the hours
From earliest morning till the setting sun.
Then that wild sport and playfulness of grief
Sadden'd to drear sobriety, gave place
Sweet-dreaming twilight to the bright clear day.
Then first she thought of beasts and fowls obscene
Battening on his fair limbs, no hand to heap
The scanty pity of a little earth
Upon the brave, the princely, and the fair.
Envious of partner in her sacred toil,
Bearing her precious burthen in her arms,
Alone upon the pious quest she speeds.
She fears not, ah too wretched now to fear!
Darkness is on her steps, but what to her
Though nature's rich varieties are blank?
Her guide the unblinded sympathies within;
The love that link'd her to his living soul
Will light her to him lifeless; yon wan stars,

That struggle with the haze, are bright enough
To beam upon the dead. But now more fast
Their golden cressets multiply, more clear—
And lo, fierce Offa in her path: his eye
Fix'd on her with a rude imperious lust,
As the pollution of his bad desires
Did honour to their victim. But the maid,
Unbelieving, unsuspecting aught impure,
With sweet beseeching, almost with caress,
Would win her onward passage; when her soul
Was startled into fear, she would not think
Such savage nature dwelt in human hearts.
She wept, she sued, she drew the veil away,
Held up the pallid head she bore—in vain:
The snowy dove is in the rude kite's grasp,
Pale, fluttering, fainting: upon Heaven she call'd,
Cruelly calm look'd on her the cool skies;
She call'd on Abisa, but only felt
More deeply that cold glassiness of face,
That dull, indifferent witness of her shame.
But in the stress and hurry of despair
Strange energies were hers, with frantic voice
She call'd on the Avenger.—Lo, he comes,
Terrible in the silence of his arms,
And earth is red with Offa's lustful blood.
But her first motion was a frantic kiss
On Abisa's cold lips, as though for him
Proud of the untainted treasure of her love;

Then turn'd to her preserver, but with looks
Of loathing more than thankfulness. He stood
In gentle majesty serene, yet proud
Of that light victory, of prevented crime
Severely joyful. Bitter strife of heart
Spake in her language—" Had it been but death,
I yet had curs'd thee! oh, look here, look here!
(And she withdrew the clust'ring curls that veil'd
The rigid, lifeless, but still lovely, brow)
Oh, one sole feeling to this dead heart seem'd
A duty and delight, the hate of thee.
Cruel, even that thou enviest me, even that."—
" That, British maiden! is a Saxon's face,
Yet mourns thy amorous heart in guilty tears?"—
" Is there not beauty in a Saxon's cheek,
Is there not music on a Saxon's tongue,
Is there not tenderness in Saxon hearts?
Oh, he is kind and true, his love to me
Almost as deep and fond as mine to him,
Wild that I am, he was, that fatal ' was '
Makes agony my sacred thought of him."—
" Maiden, by Wye's transparent stream abode
An aged pair, and their declining day
One beauteous child enlighten'd, and dispens'd
Soft moonlight o'er their darkening eve; they thought
The only pang of death from her to part.
But heavy was their sinking to the grave,
For that fair beam in unchaste darkness quench'd

Its virgin lustre, and its light withdrew,
Of their old limbs the life: alone they dwelt,
In discontent and cold distaste of all,
For her ingratitude had made them sick
Of the world's hollowness, and if she fail'd
All earthly things must needs be false and frail.
They ne'er reproach'd her, for so near the grave
They could not hate; but for her sake they loath'd
Each old familiar face, that once they lov'd.
Where she was wont to wander, wander'd they;
The garden flowers she tended, they bound up
With woeful care; their chill and shaking hands
Made tremulous music with her lute—I shrunk
In hoary age to see such childish joys.
They felt one after pleasure, the same hour
They glided from their woes; their parting breath,
Blended in languid blessings on her head,
For her went suppliant to the throne of God,
Their lost Myfanwy." Trembling stood she there,
Like one that strives to weep, but the hard tears
Are frozen in their source. "Oh thou and I,
Sweet Abisa (to that cold head she spake),
We will go weep upon their graves, and win
Their spirits to forgiveness; when they hear
How fervent and how fatal were our loves,
Heaven will lend airs to waft their pardon down."—
"Fond Maid, beware! repentance must be chaste
And spotless as the unsunn'd snow; wilt thou

Yet wanton with the memory of thy sin,
Bad thoughts at revel in thy heart, with vows
Lightly made up of guilty breath impure,
Pollute and sicken the clear air that dwells
About the holy dwellings of the dead?
Waver from God to Pagan paramour
With wandering loose affections?"—"Hard and cold,
Be thou content to have robb'd this widow'd heart
Of that most lovely breathing thing earth bore,
But spare, oh spare, the sinless, senseless dead!
Cruel! by yon bright stars I oft have sworn
Ne'er to forego him; shall I crown my sins
With perjury? I will weep, and fast, and pray,
And wear the rough stones with my tender knees,
So thou wilt leave me my sad thoughts of him.
Oh, God hath grace for all; my earliest prayer
Shall be for mercy on his perish'd soul,
The next for those who dying pray'd for me,
And for my sad and sinful self the last."
Most exquisite sorcery of womankind!
Even to the fall'n some cherish'd loveliness
Yet clings, with innocent hypocrisy
Tricking their failures in such tender hues,
We blame with tears, admiring while we blame.
Even thus her fervent constancy of love
Brighten'd that guilty maiden. "God will weigh
With righteous hand thy sorrows and thy sins,
Damsel, I nor absolve thee, nor condemn.

Come thou with me, and we will reunite
That beauteous boy's remains; oh thou, even thou,
Knew'st thou the studious cruelties, cold crimes
By these barbarians wrought on this sad land,
Wouldst pardon this dishonour to the corpse
Of that brave youth." She leap'd up to his neck,
"And who art thou, that dost such savage deeds,
Yet forcest us to love thee?" On they passed,
They reach'd the place of death, he dug away
The earth that fenc'd from wandering kite and wolf
Young Abisa's fair limbs; he sooth'd her woes
By soft participation, her consol'd
By suffering, and the Christian's voice rose up
In prayers for mercy on a Saxon's soul.

BOOK VII.

ARGUMENT.

Hengist on the Throne of Britain. Caswallon on the Throne of the North at Caer Ebranc (York). Samor. The Vale of Towey, near Caer Merddhyn (Caermarthen), now the capital of Vortigern's kingdom of Dyfed (or Dimetia). Queen Rowena. Samor in Caer Merddhyn. His interviews with Rowena in the Palace, and at midnight on the heath. Meeting and combat with Argantyr. Samor wounded, succoured by Myfanwy.

How measureless to erring human sight
True glory! Glorious thy majestic state,
Hengist! with captive cities for thy thrones,
And captive nations thy pale satellites,
Britain, and all her beauty, power, and wealth,
Thy palace of dominion. Glorious thou,
Caswallon, in Caer Ebranc's stately courts,
By the slow waters of the wandering Ouse,
Bright-sceptred Renegade! Even in your crimes
Glitters a dazzling and meteorous pomp,
Though your wild voyage hath lain through waves of blood,

Ye ride triumphant in your royal port.
But he, sad Pilgrim, outcast and forlorn,
How doth the midnight of his honour shame
Your broad meridian, his wild freedom pass
Your plenitude of sway, his nakedness
Transcend your sweeping purples, rayed with gold!
Nor wanteth to his state its gorgeous pride,
And high peculiar majesty; the pomp
Of the conspiring elements sheds on him
Tumultuous grandeurs; o'er his midnight couch,
Amid the scath'd oaks of the mountain moor,
On its broad wings of gloom the tempest stoops.
Around his head in crystal coronets
The lightning falls, as though thy fiery hand,
Almighty! through the rolling clouds put forth,
Did honour to the Freeman. Mighty winds
And the careering thunders spread around
Turbulent music; darkness rivals day,
And day with darkness vies in stateliest pride
The Avenger's lofty miseries to array.
When from the East forth leaps the warrior Sun
In panoply of golden light, dark cowers
His own proud eagle, marvelling what strong form,
Uprising to usurp his haughty right,
Drinks in the intense magnificence with brow
Undazzled and unshrinking; nor to him
Fails homage from the living forms of earth:
Fawning to him beasts fierce and savage pay

Tame adoration; from his rugged sleep
The wild boar, all his bristling wrath subdued,
Shrinks, the grim wolf no'more his rest disturbs,
Than the calm motion of the moon she bays.

Now, by her native sylvan Wye, that Maid
Left to cold penitence and prayer, again
Sets forth the high Avenger: now his path
Through Towey's vale winds velvet soft and green.
The year is in its waning autumn glow;
But the warm Sun, with all his summer love,
Hangs o'er this gentle valley, loath to part
From the blue stream that to his amorous beams
Now her cool bosom spreads, now coyer slides
Under her alder shade, whose umbrage green,
Glancing and breaking the fantastic rays,
The deep dark mirror frets with mazy light.
A day that seems in its rich noon to blend
All seasons' choice deliciousness; high hung
On Dinevaur and Carreg Cennon rude,
And on bold Drusslyn gleam'd the woods with hues,
Changeful and brilliant, as their leaves had drunk
The sun's empyreal fountains; not more bright
The groves of those Atlantic Isles, where rove
(Dream'd elder Poesy such fancies sweet)
The spirits of the brave, stern Peleus' son,
And Diomede, through bowers o'erarching all
With an immortal spring of fragrant gold.
The merry birds, as though they had o'erdream'd

The churlish winter, spring-tide virelays
Carolling, pruned their all-forgotten plumes.
Upon the sunny shallow lay the trout
Kindling the soft gems of its skin; the snake
As fresh and wanton in its green attire
Wound its gay rings along the flowery sward.
That overpowering beauty in mild bonds
Of sweet amazement and infatuate bliss,
Took prisoner Samor's spirit. On a rock,
'Neath a white canopy of glistening birch,
He lay surrender'd. The thin whispering leaves,
The welling waters' flow, the lingering, long,
Love-dwelling descant of the joyous birds,
Came mingling with the languor of his sense,
Most soothing each in turn, most slumb'ring soft.
'Tis no harsh breaking in that train of sound
Delicious, but a low and measur'd dash
That blends and deepens all the mingling tones;
'Tis nought to cloud or dim that slow intrudes
On the universal brilliance, crowning all
Moves the gay apparition, and fires up
The restless glittering to intenser blaze.
Slow up the tide the gaudy bark comes on,
Her oars scarce startling the unruffled air;
The waters to her swan-like prow give place,
Along the oar-blades leap up to the sun
In lucid flakes, and dance, as 'twere their sport
To waft that beauteous freight. And exquisite

As that voluptuous Memphian on the stream
Of Cydnus, leading with bliss-breathing smiles
Her throngs of rash beholders, glided down
To welcome to his soft imprisonment
The Lord of half the world: so wond'rous fair
Under an awning cool of fluttering silk
The Lady of that graceful galley sate.
But not in her instinct the melting form
With passion, the smooth limbs in dazzling glow
Translucent through the thin lascivious veil,
Skilful with careless blandishments to fire
The loose imaginations, she herein
Least like that Oriental harlot Queen.
Pride seem'd of all her shape, of all her soul
The sustenance, the luxury, the life;
The innate scorn of her full eye repaid
With lofty thanklessness the homage fawn'd
By her fair handmaids, and her oarmen gay,
Who seem'd to wanton in their servile toil.
Around she gaz'd, as, in her haughtiness,
She thought that God had form'd this living pomp
Of woodland, stream, and rock, her height of soul
To pamper, that to welcome her the earth
Attired its breathing brightness, and the sun
Only on her look'd from his azure sphere.
Knows Samor that bright Lady? Who knows not
Amid her twinkling retinue of stars
The queenly summer moon? You too he knows,

The minion rowers of her royal state,
Entitled once by courteous falsehoods bland
Nobles of Britain, from the general wreck
Most despicably saved by Saxon scorn,
Meet vassalage for Vortigern, now shrunk
And dwindled from proud Britain's sov'reign lord
To petty Prince of Dyfed.* Ye yet cling
Even to the hollow semblance of a crown,
Ye gauzy summer motes, that float and bask
In the warm noontide of a court, light things
Of noise and glittering, that to royal ears
Tinkle your poisonous flatteries, then most proud
When most obtrusive your gay nothingness.
Under a rock where Samor lay unseen
Beneath the sparkling birchen shade, the bark
Glided so near, the silver-twinkling leaves
Play'd like a wavering veil o'er the bright face
And marble neck of that reclining Queen.
Now, Samor, now 'tis at thy thirsty lips
The cup of vengeance, now quaff deep, quaff deep!
Now, by the bones that bleach on Ambri plain,
By thy lost Emeric's silent chamber bowers,
By that soft cheek o'er which the primrose blooms,
Now launch the unerring javelin! lo she tempts,
The Saxon's daughter, and the false King's bride,

* Or, Dimetia, i. e. South Wales. I supposed that Vortigern had retreated into Wales, assumed the kingdom of Dimetia, or South Wales, of which Caer Merddhyn (Caermarthen) was the capital.

The tame and baffled lingering of revenge.
And up the Avenger stood, a ray of light
Quiver'd his brandish'd javelin, creeping awe
Froze up the rowers' hearts, down fell the oars,
And to the shore round swung the ungovern'd bark.
But 'mid those feminine and timorous men
Intrepid that soft lady her fair front
Advanc'd, and, "Who art thou, whose impious arm
'Gainst royalty's anointed head dare sway
Irreverent menace?"—"One whom grinding wrong,
And injuries cruel, black, and manifold,
Have almost madden'd to the unwarlike guilt
Of soiling his bright arms with woman's blood.
(He cast the javelin from him, and went on)
But tell thy sire, Rowena, tell thy lord,
Britons have yet to learn their codes of war,
That yet fastidious vengeance will not slake
But on a worthy victim its deep thirst."
Then was the mingling of their looks elate,
As when two falcons, far from this low earth,
Meet in the sun's broad blaze, they, glad and proud
Each of their kindred, flap their radiant wings.
"I know thee now, majestic Rebel! thee
The untraceable, untameable! I know
The chosen Man of Fate! of all our race
The designated danger; merciful,
Saxon ne'er coupled with thy name till now.
Yet think not thou from rivalry aloof

In proud and lonely excellence to stand,
For with requital royal and profuse
I will transcend thee; this my woman's hand
Shall cast thee Hengist's pardon for thy deeds
Of guilty fame; this smooth and damask cheek
Smile thee fair honours in Caer Merddhyn's court."

"Pardon, and honour, Lady! one alone
Jealous prerogative of pardon holds
O'er Samor's soul, the universal God!
Caer Merddhyn's honours! to fall'n Vortigern
To be install'd prime flatterer, meekly laud
The bounteous-hearted monarch, who cast off
His throne, his people, and his fame, and thought
For bride so fair the dowry all too poor."

No wrath, but brighter joy the Lady's cheek
Emblazon'd: "Why should slight and tinsel ties
Of blood and birthplace hold asunder hearts
Kindred in grandeur? thou art brave and free,
And brave and free is Hengist; why disdains
Valour to mate with valour, might with might?"—
"Valour beneath the sun goes proudly forth;
And in the cloudy battle's van affronts
His hauberk'd foe, but folds not secret steel
Under the mild and festal robe of peace,
Nor creeps with midnight stealth on the weak sleep
Of women and soft infants."—Then appear'd
Tears in her haughty eyes, tears beautiful,
For drops of shame they were for those black crimes

That fleck'd and dimm'd her father's blaze of fame.
Still paus'd not the Avenger. "Did my God,
Did Britain claim the offering, I dare hope
Yet I could rend from this worn heart away
Its cherished lust of vengeance; private wrongs
Are but as drops in my full tide of hate;
But all my country's injuries, all my God's,
Concentrate in the mighty passion flood,
My life, my soul, my being; we must be,
I and thy father, through all space of time,
Even to the end, Destroyer or Destroy'd."
"Harsh and Implacable! yet be not thou
Discourteous: wilt thou to Caer Merddhyn come,
An honour'd guest, in freedom to depart
When, where, thou wilt, thy pledge my royal faith?"
"A Saxon's faith!" burst bitter from his lips,
He check'd the upbraiding tone. "If fraud and sin
In such a lovely temple hold their shrine,
It were not strange did fiends of darkness dwell
Within yon beauteous sun!" But she with smile
Mild as May morning on a violet bank,
"Why stayest thou? can the Unconquerable fear——?"
"Fear, Lady! fear and I are strangers now."—
"What wondrous spell," pursued her playful mirth,
"So steels thee."—"One most simple and most strong,
A tranquil conscience, and a faith in God."
Then sate he by the Lady's side, the bark
Upon its dancing voyage down the tide

Set forth obeisant to its dashing oars.
But those gay rowers, veering with the wind
Of soft court favour, 'gan with subtle joy
And cold factitious transport hail again
Their gentle peer, their old and honour'd friend.
But with a glance the imperial lady froze
To silence their smooth-lying lips, nor brook'd
Idle intrusion on her rapturous feast.
Deep drank she in, the majesty and pomp,
Wherewith instinct the Avenger mov'd and spake,
And what high beauty from heroic soul
Emanates on the outward shape: nor pall'd
On her insatiate appetite the joy;
Even till that intercourse of lofty thoughts,
Proud admiration, and intense delight
In what is heart-exalting and sublime,
Became a fiery passion; o'er her flow'd
Secret the intoxicating ecstasy,
Love, dangerous, deep, intolerable love.
What beauteous seeming and magnificent,
Wears that enchanting sin! now not o'er her
Came it in melting languor, soft and bland;
But like her own high nature, eminent,
Disdainful, and elate, allied to all
That beautified, that glorified; and seem'd
Mysterious union of two soaring spirits,
The wedding lofty thoughts with lofty thoughts,
The noble joy of being to this earth

A boast and wonder: and as floats the air
Clear, white, and stainless in the highest heavens,
Thus, from its exaltation fresh and pure,
Above all taint her amorous madness rose.
Had it seem'd love, her pride had timely quell'd
The unplum'd phantasy, her inbred scorn
Repress'd the young infirmity; but now
Upon her soul's bold crest it planted high
Its banner of dominion, and she hail'd
Its coming as a guest of pomp and power.
But though o'er all her features mantling spread
A vivid restlessness, a brighter glow,
A deepening purple, though her eye indulg'd
Richer delirium, though her languid breath
Came with a throb and struggle from her heart,
Yet in that noble blindness that disdains
With greedy and suspicious gaze to search
The sin that may be, rather chastening all
With his own native purity, serene
The Warrior sate. The placid gliding bark,
With motion like to stillness, drifted down,
Where with green diadem of woods above,
Beneath the white breadth of the expanding stream,
Caer Merddhyn in the liquid noontide rose.
Fair rose Caer Merddhyn, rose enriching air
With her bright towers: nor misbecame a king
Such stately dwelling; populous her streets,
And throng'd with human faces; but o'er all

A lassitude and heavy sadness hung,
Blankness of looks and weariness of hearts,
And listlessness of motion faltering on.
With all the pomps, the luxuries of life,
It seem'd a city of the dead. The shapes,
The steps of men were there, but soul and spirit,
And stirring energy, and vivid mind,
Passion and earnestness, in torpor slept,
The cold blood stagnate in the drowsy veins.
Alike all feelings lazy languor seal'd;
To still them, not delight, the mothers held
Their infants, as the radiant Queen pass'd on;
But even in them the laughing spring of joy
Was dead, and dry, and frozen. "Oh, high God!
(So spake the Wanderer in his secret soul)
Hath tyranny such bleak and withering power
Man's heavenly essence to embrute, and thou,
Once princely Vortigern, the tyrant thou!"
Worse sight! worse shame! they reach the broad hill's brow,
Where in its royalty the palace look'd
Awe on its vassal city; there, even there,
On that high threshold, armed Saxon files
From the weak people fenc'd the weaker King.
But through that legion hateful and accurst
Onward the Avenger that bright Lady's hand
Led, as the Sybil sage the Love-queen's son
Calm through the doleful regions of the dead.

Within the hall with royal banners hung,
And shields of royal blazon, royal arms,
Least royal he, sate Vortigern; deep thought
And miserable on his faded brow
Traced its deep lines, before him glittering lay
The crown of Britain, which his eye perused
With a sick sadness, as each gem were full
Of woeful ruminations, blank remorse;
And as bad Angels loathe, yet upward watch,
Heaven's Sun, bright type of their once radiant state,
Even so in bitterness that fallen King,
Painfully banqueting on self-reproach,
Mournful remembrance of lost grandeurs drew
From that fair ring; and curs'd its blaze that flash'd
Past splendours o'er the darkness of his soul,
Recalling from what height to what depth sunk,
He welters in the abyss of shame profound.
Beside him o'er his harp Aneurin bow'd,
The white-hair'd Bard, sole faithful he, sole friend;
For minds of poets from their own high sphere
Look down on earth's distinctions, high and low,
Sunken or soaring, as the equal sun
Sheds light along the vale and mountain's brow.
He in the hall of feasting who fast seal'd
The treasures of his harmony, now pours
Into the wounded heart his syrups sweet,
And laps it in the silken folds of sound.
But even along his strings the infectious grief

Hath crept, and wither'd up their wantonness,
And lost in wayward wanderings of despair
Stray the vague tones; anon bursts full and free
A start, a swell of pride; then sinks away
Involuntary to such doleful fall,
Misery so musical, its languid breath
Feeds, while it softens the deep-rooted woe.
Such melodies at tragic midnight heard
'Mid a deserted city, gliding o'er
The deep green moss of tower and fane o'erthrown,
Had seem'd immortal sorrows in the air,
O'er man's inconstant grandeurs. Sad such wreck,
More sad, more worthy Angels' woe the waste
And desolation of a noble mind.
But at their entrance startling, half in wrath
The King began—"Who thus unbidden bursts
On this our solitude? why ask I thee?
No brow, between the Scot and Southern sea,
Moves in such dauntless insolence abroad,
But Samor, the wild Wanderer, the denounc'd,
The desperate! Art thou here to stun mine ears
With 'Vortigern is abject, lost, disgrac'd?'
'Tis well that with thee comes my bright excuse,
My poverty's rich treasure, my night's star,
Beauteous Rowena." Joy seem'd his, but yet
That joy was forced, constrain'd, unnatural all,
The striving of a barren heart to force
The perish'd bloom of pleasure,—"King, I come

To put a spell upon thee, conjure up
Thy valour from its tomb within thy breast,
To rend the adamant that trammels fast
Thy strength of soul. By yon bright glaive that smote
On Esk's wild bank, beneath his father's shield,
The royal Caledonian's son; yon flag,
That, when by fated Arles rash Britain lost
Her noble hazard for imperial state,
Clouding the car of adverse victory, shook
Untarnish'd in the sun its blazon broad,
Nor stoop'd, though all was fallen; by yon rich crown,
Whereon when flow'd the holy oil, this isle
From all her seas her gratulant acclaim
Sent up, and overcast heaven's vault with joy;
By Vortigern, the great, the brave the wise!"——
"Brave! wise! aye, that it is. The veriest wretch
That from base birth-place to his baser grave,
Creeps with his fellow reptiles, that ne'er knew
What luxury 'tis, what loftiness to soar,
And with one soul to wield a host of souls
In free subjection: oh that fireless dust,
Clay uninform'd that only lives to die,
That is to me a God! to me whose curse,
And brand, and mock it is, to have been great—
And be—oh! Samor, Samor, I was King,
King of this spacious, rich, and glorious isle,
And thou, and such as thou, my regal state
Didst vassal; now, but now an eye may trace

The circuit of my realm, a shepherd's boy
Count my thin people, like his mountain flock."
"Oh, Monarch, ill must be atoned by good,
And to repentant deeds of mightiest fame
Heaven can upraise the farthest sunken. Power
Fails not the aspirant will. I knew thee once
A being of those arduous energies,
Strong aspirations, graspings undefin'd,
Tumultuous thirsts and passions, that of man
Make Fiend or Angel."—"True, too true, but thou
Hast seiz'd the Seraph's air-plum'd wings, and I
The Demon's vans of darkness. Had all fallen,
All perish'd, one wide ignominy swept
Princes and Lords and People, I had found
Comfort forlorn in the universal wreck;
But in its curst sublimity thy fame
Obtrudes its radiant presence, and makes groan
This ruin of a Monarch."—"Rare it is,
Oh King, in Fame's rich galaxy to shine
With stedfast blaze unwithering, but to dawn
From darkness, scatter off the black eclipse
That veils the wither'd lustre, this most rare
Makes of man's soul an everlasting fire
Worthy the God that hung the Heavens with light.
'Tis hard for downcast spirit to o'erleap
Ruin's sad barriers, but Heaven's angels drop
Soft dews beneath his burning feet, his flight
Imp with strong plumes; his coming doth adorn

The earth he moves on; till Remorse abash'd
Before the orient glories fades and flies."
"Peace! peace! thou canst not see what cold within
Lies like a palsy on the flagging powers,
Makes me a thin and shrinking reed, the sport
Of every lazy wind, the shape, the life,
The woe, without the faculties of man,
Shame, shame! I stoop my spirit to endure,
Of all this nation, the curse-wrinkled lips,
Out-pointed fingers, ribald jests, coarse scorns!
Men that have lick'd the dust beneath my feet,
Worn their tame faces by the mould of mine,
Them, to confront even them." Unkingly tears
Chok'd the full utterance, but he met the glance
Of that proud Queen, who, all unmark'd, observ'd
That passionate discourse, from her contempt,
Though far below his own, he shrunk, and wrought
To a brief pride his wan dejected mien.
"Here is my throne, my kingdom in this breast,
My diadem the wealth of light that shines
From yon fair brow upon me." Stronger pain
Burst in upon the infant pride: forth fled
The monarch, happy could he fly himself.
Him follow'd that old Bard. "'Tis vain, all vain!"
(Thus spake the high Avenger.) "Beauteous Queen,
I claim thy faith, and part."—"So swift, so soon,
Our festal cheer untasted, welcome cup
Uncrown'd?"—"Fair Queen, in the pellucid stream

My beverage dances; the coarse mountain boor
Shares his hard fare with me; the hand that feasts
The winged wanderers of the air, feasts me."
With lips in act of speech apart, the Queen,
As to her will her tongue disdainful scorn'd
Allegiance, chain'd in silence stood again.
Twice she essay'd to speak, twice o'er her Shame
Swept his petrific hand, and rosy fire
O'er face and neck and forehead flush'd, till shrunk
From that strong heat the eye, and down on earth
Settled its close fring'd orb; with pressure soft
Her blushing fingers his bronz'd hand embrac'd.
"Here in this palace is my rule, this land
Is mine by my prevailing power, would'st thou
Of this high seat, this realm, be Lord?—Why starts
Unwonted colour to thy cheek? why shrinks
Into its sphere thine eye? Said I this soul,
And what soft beauty glitters in this shape,
Had it appall'd thee?" Eagerly she grasp'd
The hand she held, as though from thence to wring
A swift reply, yet gaz'd upon the earth,
As wistful 'neath its darkness she might shrink
From her own shame. Blank wonder Samor's brow
To living stone congeal'd—"This then the close
To all thy lavish love of Vortigern!"
"My love! he was a King! upon his brow
The beauty of a royal crown, his height
Dominion, like a precious mantle, dipt

In heaven's pure light, array'd, and o'er him flung
Transcendent grandeur; above all he stood,
And I by such fond splendours wooed and won,
Took seat upon his eminence; a plant
To spread, and mantle an imperial throne,
Not like tame ivy round a ruin creep,
Or wreathe the tomb of royalty. His pride
I wedded, not his shame. He, he himself
By self-abasement has divorc'd me, set
Distance between us wide and far as heaven
From the black pit of infamy."—"High Queen,
What seest thou in this bleak and batter'd brow,
These rough scath'd limbs, this wan and sunken face,
With misery's rugged furrows deeply plough'd,
To dazzle or delight? Lone outcast I,
Friendless, but daily, nightly, by fierce foes
Beset, and hunted like a loathsome brute;
Thy nation's mothers vent all hate on me,
Link with a scathing curse no name but mine.
Oh, what would'st thou and softness with a life
Like mine so dreary, desperate, dark, and fierce?"
"Oh, 'tis because all hate thee, that I love,
Because all dread thee, I would mate with thee.
Thy miseries, thy dangers deeper plunge
My soul in passion; that alone thou walk'st,
Smote at by every arm, yet struck by none.
That mastery of thy single soul holds down
The Saxon's mounting empire; that thy fame,

Like a rich rainbow cloud, sails on through air,
To mortal grasp impalpable, to sight
In lonely brilliance manifest; my soul
To that thy airy chariot would aspire,
And dazzle by thy side, and daunt the world."
"Loose and unrighteous to thy lawful Lord,
Yet would'st thou poison with adulterous shame
Its spotless lustre, its pure white defile,
And clog with guilt its vaunted wheels."—"Guilt! Guilt!
Ah, now I know why mine eye shrunk from thine,
Why droop'd to earth, and why my tongue disdain'd
The motions of my will—but we—shrink we?
The lofty are their own high law; dull codes,
Cold customs, trammel but the base; our sins
Shall be the wanderings of the meteor fire,
More wonder'd than the regular calm stars.
Our acting shall ennoble what tame tongues
Falter at, even in word; opinion's hues
Shall at our haughty bidding shift and change,
And what we do, shall therefore be call'd great.
Yes, yes, I feel thy shrinking hand, I see
Abhorrent anger quivering in thy mien,
As at some loathsome viper. Woe, oh woe
To him that tramples on the viper's wrath."
Then shook she back her golden hair, away
Cast his cold hand.—"Ho, Saxons at the gate,
Ho, Saxons, to your injured Queen!" The hall
Sudden was walled with fiery arms, and spears

Gleaming fierce menace; numerous, swift, and strong,
As when old Cadmus by clear Dirce spread
That dangerous seed uncouth, long, wide, and bright
Under the fatal ploughshare leap'd to life,
To havock, the wild harvest, and shook up
Its bearded grim fertility of death.
But then his sword the Avenger grasp'd, and cried,
"Twice have I trusted Saxon faith, and twice
Beneath my feet the smooth fair ice hath burst
Its glassy treachery; once this arm redeem'd
The infatuate blindness. Saxons, I am he,
Who with his single strength on Ambri plain
Scared your hot massacre, your proudest necks
Strew'd for his pavement of retreat, ye see
Mine arm unwither'd, my unbroken sword."
But they sprung onward; that bright Lady's brow
Awful delight absorb'd the while, she moved
Before their wrath, her arm's high sway waved back
Their fury from her presence. Swift they came,
Swift they departed; silence down the walls
Crept o'er the banners broad, and pendant shields.
She look'd on Samor, all his pride was hers,
She look'd on Samor, all that pride was quench'd
In wild delicious transport; at his feet
The Queen, the haughty, the disdainful, fell.
Her fine fair hair lay floating on the earth;
Her round arms clung beseeching to his knees.
"A curse upon me, that my wilful heart

'Gainst head so brave, so noble, dream'd of wrath,
Of danger and rude menace. What I did,
I know not; what I said, it pleased not thee;
Enough! 'twas base, 'twas criminal, 'twas false.
Oh Chief! when we would compass wild desires,
Words alien to the heart start up, yet seem
Most strong persuasion; of all serpents, scorn
Stings to worse frenzy, worst a woman's soul.
Forget all, all forget, but one soft word,
And that I charge thee, by thy rescued life,
Forget not."—"Lady, were I rich in love,
As yon full Sun in light, I could not spare
A beam upon a Saxon. Now, but now
The fountains of my heart are dry, the stock
Where fresh and rich my green affections bloom'd,
Is wither'd to the root; rigid and dead,
My breast's impassive iron scatters off
All melting blandishments, all soft delights,
As the wav'd banner the thin morning dews.
With one harsh discord to consummate all;
Thou art thy Father's daughter." She arose
In miserable calmness resolute.
She took his hand, she led him forth, beneath
The angry scowling of those Saxons stern,
Whose curious wonder scarce herself controll'd:
Gave one fond lingering pressure, and but one,
Then watch'd him through the city, up the vale,
If gazing with such emptiness of eye

Were watching, which his distance seem'd to freeze
Gradual to hollower wanness; down her arms
Hung, only that she stood and faintly breath'd,
Pulse, motion, sense, life, all seem'd fled with him.
Sudden above her, the mild air 'gan waft
Wild fiery sounds, like those of battle morn
Which champing war-steed's neigh, and lance's rush,
Impatient answers. On the palace top
Aneurin in his bardic glory stood.
The sunlight on his old prophetic brow
Flash'd strong, yet dazzled not, his long white locks
Stream'd back upon his azure robe, like rack
O'er heaven's unclouded blue, his pale thin hand
With strength of mounting frenzy launch'd abroad
The war-song of Cassivelan: glad sounds
To that tranc'd queen, for Samor's hastier port
Deliberate grandeur slacken'd, he look'd back,
Proud gratitude for that wild flattery. "All,
All in one wide conspiracy (so spake
Rowena's bitter joy), thee, only thee
To glorify. Oh, were man mute, this earth
Would leap to utterance of thy fame, the winds
Find voices eloquent, the streams, the stones,
To lofty music burst of thy renown."
Slowly retired the Queen; she call'd around
Her slaves, her handmaids; arrogant their looks
Seem'd to confront her, eyes once wont to shrink
Before her gaze, now seem'd to pry and pierce

Her deepest soul's recesses; and she blush'd
Even in her plenitude of scorn. They stood
Trembling before her wayward mood, yet seem'd
Their fears to mock her; solitude she sought,
Yet solitude found none, things senseless took
Stern cognizance of all her acts, her thoughts.
Eyes hung the empty walls, weak laughing sounds
Of triumph o'er her shame pervaded wide
The tranquil air; all with herself at league
Shook scorn upon herself. Dim evening falls,
O'er earth and sky slow flits the shadowy night.
"Slaves there!" she cried, "my steed! alone I ride."
She wont to find her every look a law,
Now almost wonders all so swift obey.

The moon's white sickle tenderly array'd
With dubious lustre the grey heavens; scarce tinged
The dew-webs, whiten'd not the yellow crown
Of the unwaving forest; ignorant,
Or with feign'd ignorance 'guiling even herself,
Long upon Samor's track the Lady rides.

'Tis not a stag that couches on the heath;
Hope on her dim cheek brightens, from her steed
Soft she dismounts, she ruffles not the fern,
The moss springs printless up beneath her feet,
So light her gliding to that slumbering man.
She knows him, she starts back. "Oh, came I here,
Lost and abas'd, him, only him to seek,
That answers mine immodest heart with flight,

With scorn, perchance with hate! yet wondrous he,
Wondrous in rest as action! Sleep'st thou calm,
While, numberless as these brown heath-spikes, rise
Legions of spears around thee, for thy blood
Leagued in one furious thirst? Unwise and rash!
To night thou slumber'st not unguarded; sleep,
And if Rowena mingle with thy dreams,
Sleep calmly, breathingly as now! He wakes—
Oh, hateful even in slumber that harsh name
Grates on his sense." His eyes unfold, nor start;
So soft the vision, wonder's self is calm,
And dwells on it with mild unshrinking gaze.
Her long bright hair, like threads of silver, streak
The moonlight, her fair forehead's marble arch
Wild joyous fearfulness, ecstatic doubt,
Bathe with the dewiness of melting snow,
Ere yet unblanch'd its stainless glitter pure.
Oh, soft and slow that melody of mien
Steals o'er the slumberer; ere the reason woke,
The sense was drunken; one hand folded her's
That answer'd not its pressure, nor withdrew,
Tremulous, yet motionless: his rising head
Found on her other arm such pillowing soft,
As the fond ringdove on its mate's smooth down.
They spake not, moved not. 'Tis the noon of night,
Hour known to Samor not by sign or sound
Of man's wise art to mark the fleeting time,
Nor changing of the starry heavens; but e'er

By motion of the secret soul, by calm
Habitual sliding into the sooth'd heart,
Distinct from turbulent day and weary eve,
Emeric's own hour, her consecrated spot
In his life's wilderness. She comes, she comes,
The clouds have dropt her from their silvery folds;
The mild air wafts her, the rank earth impure
Stainless she skims; distrust, doubt, fear, no place
Find in the sinless candour of her mien.
In languid soft security she melts
On Samor's fever'd soul, she fills his sense,
Her softness like the nightingale's first notes
After rude evening, o'er his passion steals.
He cast not off Rowena's hand, it fell
As from a dead man's grasp; slow rose his head
From its fair zone, as from a bank of snow
The winter traveller, by its smoothness 'guil'd
Almost to deathful sleep; he dares not now
Welcome that heavenly visitant, nor could,
Nor would he her mild rescue bid depart.
Nor dares he now with chill abhorrence shrink
From that empassion'd Lady; on his lips
A sad imploring silence clung, that framed
Nor word nor sound. But time for thought in her
Gave time for shame, for struggling pride gave time.
"Thou deem'st me loose, wild, wanton, deem'st me come
To lure thee with light sweets of lawless love,
Hunting mine own shame through the midnight woods.

Oh false, all false!—How thee shall I persuade,
Ah me! that scarce persuade myself, 'twas chance,
'Twas fate, 'twas ministration of bad spirits,
That led me thoughtless, hopeless—did I say
Hopeless? yet scorn not thou, the lightest won
Are oft best won. Oh why, ere now so mild,
So gentle, why so stern, so ghastly still?"—
"Thou lov'st my pride, my honour, my renown;
Now, Queen Rowena, may'st thou do a deed
Shall make my pride thine own, make thee my fount
Of honour, all my noontide of renown
On thee in all its golden brilliance shine;
And if henceforth man's voice cry out, High deeds
Hath Samor's arm achiev'd, thy heart shall bound
And thy lips answer, 'Mine! all mine!' and I
Will bless thee, thank thee, praise thee for that truth."
O'er proud Rowena pass'd his solemn voice
Terrifically pleasing, as the sound
Of thunder over Jove's bolt-minist'ring bird,
That sternly rocks on th' agitated air.
"Speak, speak, 'tis hours, 'tis years until 'tis done."
Return'd one brief, one powerful word—"Depart."
She struggled yet to wear the lofty light
That flush'd her brow, she struggled, and she fell,
Her white arms round his neck. Light as the breeze
Pass'd over his her cheek. Then back
She started, seiz'd her courser's rein; far, far
The rocks gave answer to its trampling hoofs.

To solitude, to peace,—ah, not to peace!—
Was Samor left; large dewy beads distil
From his full brow, as from the forest leaves
The sunny icicle: fierce, merciless,
Relentless inquest o'er himself he holds;
In him a sin in thought is sin in deed.
"And I, that on the frantic waxen wings
Of mine own arrogance, have deem'd my soul
Kindred and heritor of that rich bliss
That bathes the Angels' radiant wings in strength;
That wander'd o'er this sublunary wild
As with a charter'd scorn; that mix'd with men
But in disdainful mastery to o'er-rule
Their dim and wavering destinies; that took
With noble violence admiring earth:
O'er me hath passion wound her silken nets;
And that soft Dalila, lascivious sin,
Shorn my full honours. Now, who clothed my steps
With darkness, dread, and danger, hung my arms
With lightning, kept at bay the envious death
That feasts upon the famous of mankind;
God, God abandons me. So farewell pride,
And with pride farewell strength, the burning hope,
Glad agonies, brave bliss of holy war,
Transports of trampling on my country's foes,
And all the beauty, majesty, renown,
Vengeance, of thy triumphal state! Ye too,
Farewell, soft midnights, delicate regards

Fix'd on me from fond eyes yet bright from heaven,
Mild agitation of the purer sense,
Fresh bloomings of my faded joys, ye dreams
Lovelier than actual bliss, as heaven than earth,
Emeric abandons me. For how can snow
Drop on this foul earth stainless? how canst thou
Visit unsullied thy sad shrine defil'd,
Or beam upon his lust-benighted heart?
Oh never felt before, the fear to front
Mine own past life, the ignoble shame that burns
At human sight, and memory that ne'er sleeps,
Heart-sickening at its own deformities,
A miserable welcome bid I you:
Come, dismal comforters, faint-footed guides,
Teach me the hate of life, the dread of death."
And Samor wander'd on, not now with scope
Resolv'd, and steady purpose that absorb'd
And fix'd on one stern centre all his soul,
True as the arrow to its mark. Now where,
Whither, is all indifferent, he pursues
The wildering of the forest track, the brook
Winding its lucid error: two sad days
And chance hath led him back to Wye's green bank.
Sudden before him swept, in gallant pack,
Fleet hounds, whose keen scent quaff'd the morning dews.
Sole on their track a noble huntsman bow'd
O'er his steed's high-curv'd neck. But when he saw
Samor, that scarce his coming mark'd or heard,

He vaulted from his uncheck'd steed so fleet,
The courser seem'd to feel it not, but on
Went stately bounding down the glen. But he
Unslung his bugle horn, his hunting spear
Cast to the winds, and held his burnish'd sword
To heaven, as though to paragon its light.
"Oh, thunderer Thor, but one bold prayer of mine
E'er scaled thy heavens, and that, munificent,
I thank thee for thy granting. Samor now,
Now Christian, now baptiz'd in German gore,
Avenger, we are met, and ere we part,
Earth must be ruddier with thy blood or mine."
"Noble Argantyr, deem not thou unknown
Thy name, thy presence! nor forgot, how thou,
When Murther quaff'd his glut on Ambri plain,
Didst hold thy jealous steel aloft, lest stain
From gore by treason shed should dim its gleam;
And when I burst my iron toils, and won
My dangerous safety, how indignant joy
Stood bathing thy stern brow. Brave Anglian, thou,
But thou, of German race, to faint sloth chill'st
My sword's quick wrath."—"What, Samor out of love
With strife, and music of conflicting steel?
Hath Abisa's pale blood so quench'd his fire?
Were't not I now could force my glorious will,
Yea, I could sue thee, Briton, for the joy.
Thou wilt not credit, air hath been defil'd
With creeping whispers cold, that I, I shrunk

To second in his dangers that brave boy.
As though Argantyr would partake a foe,
And, with division spiritless and base,
Mete out his province in one man to slay;
Hear; 'Well the famous Anglian won his half
Of that great conquest!' But I have thee now
Whole, undivided. Now, or man, or more,
If aught be mortal in thee, guard that spot,
My steel will search it."—"Samor is not now
As Samor was, but knows not yet to scorn
Such brave allurements." Forth his anlace flash'd,
But not as wont, uplooks he to the sky;
He thinks not now, oh, if I fall, float near,
My Emeric, that no Angel's voice but thine
Welcome thy Samor to his opening heaven:
And if I vanquish, Britain and the Lord
Take to your hecatomb one Saxon more.
Onward Argantyr sprung, as wanton boy
To the cool health of summer streamlet pure.
Around, above, beneath, his winged sword
Leaps in its fiery joy; red, fierce, and far
As from a midnight furnace start the sparks.
As brazen statue on proud palace top
Shakes off the pelting tempest, so endur'd
Samor; but not in patient hope austere
Of victory, but habitual skill and power
Protracting long the cold indifferent strife.
Till twice that sword that in its downward sweep

Flash'd the white sunlight, cloudy rose and dim
With ominous purple: then his nature burst
Its languid bonds; not front alone to front,
But soul to soul the riot of the fight
They mingle. Like to giddy chariot wheels
The whirling of their swords, as fierce the din
Of buckler brast, helm riven, and breast-plate cloven,
As when the polar wind the ice field rends.
Such nobleness sublime of hideous fight
From Ilion's towers her floating mantled dames
Saw not; nor Thebes, when Capaneus call'd down
Jove's thunder, and disdain'd its fall: nor pride
Of later Bards, when mad Orlando met
On that frail bridge the giant Sarzan king,
And with him in the boiling flood dash'd down.*
Till that fond eagerness, that brave delight
O'erpower'd frail nature, breathless each, and each
Careless, yet conscious of deep trenching wounds,
For admiration paus'd, for hope, for power
To satiate the unwearying strong desire.
Argantyr first descried the distant hills
Radiant with spearmen, and he cried, "Away,
'Tis Hengist with his bloody bands, I know
The motion of his crest; brave Chief, away."—
"Away! and leave Argantyr here to boast
Samor hath fled him!"—"Oh, we meet again;

* Ariosto. Orlando Furioso. Canto xxix. 47, &c.

Thou art a quarry for the Gods, base lance
Must ne'er vaunt blood of thine. Argantyr spares
But for himself such noble game. Still here!
Froward and furious, if thou need'st must die,
Why so must I. Fell Hengist will not spare
An inch of quivering life on all thy limbs:
And I with such a jealous lust pursue
A noble conquest o'er thee, I must shield
Thy life with mine, for my peculiar fame;
Freely mine own death on the hazard cast,
For such a precious stake as slaying thee."

As through dusk twilight stolen, love-breathless maid,
For interchange of gentle vows, by noise
Startled of envious footstep, chides away
Her lingering youth, yet for his lingering loves,
Till her fond force hath driven him from her side.
So earnest the brave Anglian sued to flight
Reluctant Samor; o'er his sword hilt bow'd,
Stood sorrowing for the wounds himself had made,
That marr'd his speedier flight. Anon approach'd
Hengist, encircled by his state of spears,
And bright Rowena by his side. "But now
Thy steed along our camp rush'd masterless,
Therefore we seek thee, Anglian. How! thou bleed'st!
And strange! thy foeman bites not the red earth.
What might hath scathless met Argantyr's steel?"

"He, gasp'd he here in death, thy soul would dance,
The Wanderer!"—"He! he wars but on soft boys,

He dare not front Argantyr."—"False, 'tis false!"
Burst from Rowena; "he dares deeds our Gods
Had shrunk from (Hengist's cloudy brow she mark'd),
Or whence his proud claim to my father's hate?"—
"Where hath the Recreant fled? Pursue, pursue!"
Cried Hengist. "Hast thou wings to cleave the air?
Or windest the deep bosom of the earth,
Thou may'st o'ertake. Yet Samor is not now,"
He said, "as Samor was; were Samor more,
Earth and Argantyr had been wed ere now."

So spake the Anglian; leap'd Rowena's heart
In hope, in shame, in anguish, in delight.
"Oh, hath my softness sunk so deep, to change
Thy steadfast nature, yet thus chang'd, thy might
Wrests honour from thy foeman's lips."—"Oh now,"
Laughing in baffled bitterness, exclaim'd
The Saxon King, "now weave we softer nets
To toil this dangerous Wanderer. What say'st thou,
Fair-ey'd Rowena, now thou hast cast off
Thy fond, thy love-sick Vortigern? Perchance
The sunshine of thy beauty might melt down
This savage to a tame submissive slave."

Rowena, whose proud look with beauteous awe
Smote her beholders, wore her loveliness
As though she gloried in its power; now close
Crowded o'er all her face her mantle's folds,
That ill conceal'd the purple fire within.
Then forward pass'd they to the Saxon camp.

But far by Wye's green marge had Samor fled;
Till now the ebbing blood with short quick throb
Beat at his heart, his languid feet were clogg'd
With the thick forest leaves, the keen air search'd
With a cold thrill his wounds. He falls, scarce sobs;
"Merciful God, on this in all my life
The sole, the single day I would not die."
Then faint, and sickly, an oppressive rest
Seal'd sight and sense. When sleep fell on him, eve
Was gathering fast, but when he woke, morn shot
From the grey east her faint pellucid light.
His blood was stanch'd, a soothing coolness lay
On his mild wounds; the rude arch of the boughs
Seem'd woven with officious care, to veil
The bright Sun from his eyelids; the dry leaves
Were gathered round him, like a feathery couch.
He lay and listen'd; a soft step approach'd
Light as the wren along the unshaking spray;
And o'er him lean'd a maiden, pale, yet blithe
With tinge of joy, that settled hue. "Is't thou,
Gentle Myfanwy?"—"Oh, thou wak'st at length;
I long'd to tell thee what sweet dreams have sooth'd
My sorrows since we parted; in my sleep
My parents came, and with them that fond youth,
And they smil'd on him kindly. Think'st thou God
Can have such mercy on sins dark as mine!"—
"God's choicest blessings pay thy timely care
Of me, sweet maiden."—"Pardon me, oh thou,

Heaven pardon me, when first I saw thee cold,
Helpless, and bleeding, evil thoughts arose
Of my poor Abisa's untimely death."
But deeper meditation Samor's mind
Beset. "Almighty, truly thou ordain'st
Wisdom from infant lips; what moral high
Breathes in this simple maid's light-hearted smiles!
And I, for wisdom fam'd, for pride of mind,
Insulted with weak doubts thy infinite,
Illimitable goodness; she so soft,
So delicate, so sinful and so sad,
Springs on her airy plumes of hope to thee.
Oh, were mine guilt of act, not thought, the stain
Thy fount of living mercy might efface."
He pressed a kiss upon her cheek so pure
Even Abisa had granted it. "Farewell,
My kind preserver, cherish thou thy hope,
As 'twere an infant fondling on thy breast."
And fresh with hope, like gay stag newly bath'd,
Forth on his voyage lone the Avenger past.

BOOK VIII.

ARGUMENT.

Samor. The course of the Glasslyn (near Port Aberglasslyn). Merlin. The top of Snowdon. The Vision of the Destroying Angel. The Wars which are to desolate Britain. Final glory. Constitution. Banks of the Dee. Chapel. Germaine the Bishop (St. Germanus). Rowena. Samor and Emeric

His path is 'mid the Cambrian mountains wild.
The many fountains, that glide wandering down
Plinlimmon's huge round side, with murmurs smooth
Flow round him; Idris, that like warrior old
His batter'd and fantastic helmet rears,
Scattering the elements' wrath, frowns o'er his way
A broad irregular duskiness. Aloof
Snowdon, the triple-headed giant, soars,
Clouds rolling half way down his rugged sides.
Slow as he trod amid their dizzy heights,
Their silences and dimly mingling sounds,
Rushing of torrents, roar of prison'd winds;
O'er all his wounded soul flow'd strength, and pride,
And hardihood; again his front soar'd up

To commerce with the skies, and frank and bold
His majesty of step his rugged path
Imprinted. So in old poetic faith
Hyperion from his native Delian bowers,
'Mid the rich music of those sisters nine,
Walk'd the bright heights of Helicon, and shook
His forehead's clustering glories wide, and flush'd
The smoothness of his fair immortal face
With purple Godhead. Whence, ye mountains, whence
The spirit that within your secret caves
Holds kindred with man's soul? Is't that your pomp
Of exaltation, your aërial crowns
In their heaven-scaling rivalry, cast forth
Bold sympathies of loftiness, and scorn
Contagious? or in that your purer air,
Where, fresh and virgin from its golden fount,
Lies the fine light at morning, or at eve
Melts upward and resolves itself from earth,
The soul, unwound its coarse material chains,
Basks in its own divinity, and feels
There in the verge and portal of the heavens
The neighbourhood of brighter worlds unseen?
  Where the blue Glasslyn hurries her fleet course
To wanton on the yellow level sands,
On either side in sheer ascent abrupt
The rocks, like barriers that in elder time
Wall'd the huge cities of the Anakim,
Upblacken to the sky, whose tender blue

With mild relief salutes th' o'erlabour'd sight.
There on the scanty, slippery, way, that winds
With the stream's windings, Samor loiters on.
But who art thou, that in the Avenger's path
Standest in dark serenity? what joy
Instinct amid thy thick black locks reveals
The full voluptuous quietude within?
Oh, Prophet! in thy wanderings wide and far
Amid the pregnant hours of future time,
Haply the form of Samor, disarray'd
Calamity's sad vesture, hath appear'd
In plenitude of glory. Hence thine eye
With recognition glad and bright salutes
The Man of Fate. To earth that Prophet old
Bow'd down, then look'd he on the waters dark,
Then upward to the mountains. "Stony earth,
Within thy secret bosom feel'st not thou
A wondrous presence? dwells not, thou blue stream,
Under thy depth of waves a silent awe?—
Yea, Snowdon, lift thou up in sternest pride
Thy cloudy mantled brow; ye know him all,
Ye know the Avenger."—"Merlin, mock not thou
Thy fellow creature of the dust, the child
Of sin and sorrow, with o'erlabour'd phrase,
Abasing the immortal elements
From their high calm indifference to sense
Of our light motions. Simple truth severe
Beseems the lips of age. Oh, holy famed

And sage, how ill strong Wisdom's voice melts down
To the faint chime of flattery."—"Poor of pride!
Feeble of hope! thou seest thyself forlorn,
An hunted wanderer in thy native land.
I see thee clad in victory and revenge,
Thy glory sailing wide on all the winds,
Triumphant with thy blessings at thy feet
Thy own fair Britain: Fate so freely spreads
Her mystic volume to my sight."—"Oh, blind,
And ignorant as blind our insect race!
The mole would count the sunbeams, the blind worm
Search the hid jewels in the depths of earth;
And man, dim dreamer, would invade the heavens,
Self-seated in the Almighty's councils read
The secrets of Omniscience, yea, with gaze
Familiar scrutinize the Inscrutable:
I tell thee, Merlin, that the soul of man
Is destiny on earth! God gave us limbs
To execute, and intellect to will
Or good or evil, and his unseen Spirit
Our appetites of holiness, else faint
And wavering, doth corroborate: hence man's deeds
Of glory and of virtue all are God's.
If yet this heart unwearied may bear on,
Nor from its holy purpose faintly swerve,
Praise be to God, its fate is pride and joy.
But if, and oh the peril! it play false
Its country's lofty hazard, shall it shift

On wayward destiny its sloth and sin?
Evil is not, where man no evil wills,
And good is not, where will not man and God."
"Chief wise as brave! as to our feeble sight
Yon pebble's slight circumference, the Past,
The Present, and the Future of this world
Are to the All-seeing vision; oft doth Heaven
In sign and symbol duskily reveal
The unborn future; oft Fate's chariot wheels
Are harbinger'd by voices that proclaim
The manner of their coming: gifted Seers
Feel on their lips articulate the deeds
Of later days; and dim oracular sights
Crowd the weak eyes, till pall'd attention faint
To dizziness."—"Oh, Merlin, time hath been
When in the guilty cities the Lord's voice
Hath spoken by his Prophets, hath made quail,
By apparitions ominous and dire,
Strong empires on their unassailed height.
But oh, for us of this devoted isle,
Drench'd with the vials of Almighty wrath,
To gaze up, and beseech the clouds to rain
Bright miracles on this heaven-wasted land——"
"Shame choke thy speech, despondent slanderer! thee,
Avenger! this from thee! Away! my lips
Burn with the fire of heaven, my heart flows o'er
With gladness and with glory. Peerless Isle,
How dost thou sit amid thy blue domain

Of ocean, like a sceptred Queen! The bonds
Like flax have wither'd from thy comely limbs.
Thou, the strong freedom of thy untam'd locks
Shaking abroad, adornest God's fair world.
Thou noblest Eden of man's fallen state,
Apart and sever'd from the common earth,
Even like a precious jewel! deep and far
In the abyss of time thy dawn of pride
Still with a fuller and more constant blaze
Grows to its broad meridian; and Time's rolls
Are silent of thy setting. Oh, how fair
The steps of freemen in thy vales of peace;
Thy broad towns teem with wealth, thy yellow fields
Laugh in their full fertility; thy bays
Whiten and glisten with thy myriad barks.
The Angels love thee, and the airs of heaven
Are gladden'd by thy holy hymns, while Faith
Sits on thy altars, like a nestling dove,
In unattainted snowiness of plume."

"Now, by my soul, thou strange and solemn Man!
Mistrust thee more I dare not; be't a dream
Or revelation of immortal truth,
Of Britain's fame I cannot choose but hear
With a child's transport." Then the Prophet shook
The dark profusion of his swelling hair
With a stern triumph; then his aged eye
Grew restless with delight: his thin white hand
Closing round the warrior's arm, lay there

Like a hard glove of steel. He led him on,
Till now the black and shaggy pass spread out
To a green quiet valley, after named
The Bed of Gelert, that too-faithful hound
Slain fondly by his erring Lord.* The stream
Here curl'd more wanton, lightly wafting down
The last thin golden leaves the alders dropt,
Like fairy barges skimming the blue waves.
That stream o'erpass'd, rightward their silent way
Lay to the foot of Snowdon. Pause was none:
They front the steep ascent, and upward wind
A long, sheer, toilsome path; their footfalls strike
Upon the black bare stillness, audible
As in thick forest the lone woodman's axe.
'Twas strange, yet slack'd not that old reverend Man
His upward step, as though the mountain air
Were his peculiar element, still his breath
Respir'd unlabouring, lively bounded on
His limbs, late slow and tremulous. Three long hours,
Now front to front upon that topmost peak,
Erwydfa,† sit they motionless, alone:
As when two vultures on some broken tower,
That beetles o'er a dismal battle field,
In dark and greedy patience ruminate
Their evening feast, a stillness as of sleep.

* I must refer to my old friend Wm. Spencer's spirited Ballad of "Bethgelert."

† This is the name of the loftiest of the three peaks of Snowdon.

Heaves in their ruffled plumes, their deep bright eyes
Half clos'd in languid rest; so undisturb'd,
So lofty, sat the Avenger and the Seer.
The atmosphere, that palls our restless world,
Lay coiling in its murky folds below:
So in some regal theatre, when droops
The unfolding curtain, and within it shrouds
The high disastrous passions, crimes, and woes
Erewhile that fretted on its pomp of scene;
Thus Earth, with all its solemn tragedies,
Heroic vauntings, sumptuous imageries,
Was veil'd in silent darkness from their sight.
The filmless, the pellucid heaven above
One broad pure sheet of sunlight. "Gifted Man,
(Cried Samor,) wherefore to this desolate
Untrodden"——"Ha! untrodden! know ye not,
Where coarse humanity defiles not, there
The snowy-footed Angels lightly skim
The taintless soil, the fragrance of their plumes
Fans the pure air, where chokes no breath of sin
The limpid current? Desolate! the motes,
Which flicker in the sun, are few and rare
To the immortal faces, which smile down,
Exquisite transport on the ravish'd sense.
Here, from their kindred elements, emanate
The festive creatures of the heavenly fields,
Glories, and Mercies, and Beatitudes:
Some dropping on the silent summer dews,

Some trembling on the rainbow's violet verge,
Some rarely charioteering on the wings
Of the mild winds, in moonlight some.—Why shakes
The Man of Vengeance? wherefore of mine hand
This passionate wringing?"—"Tell me, truly tell;
The name of Emeric, from some mild-lipp'd tone
Hath it e'er trembled on thine ear? Old Man!
Is't sin to say her presence might adorn
That gentle company?"—"To souls like thine,
Warrior, Heaven grants sweet intercourse and free
With its beatified."—"Ah, now thou rak'st
The ashes of a buried grief: gone all,
My gentle visitations broken off,
My spirit's fond discoursings silent, ceas'd!
Oh, I talk idly, Prophet, speak thou on."
"Warrior! no more of soft and gentle sights!
Grandeurs there are, to which the gates of heaven
Set wide their burnish'd portals: midnight feels
Cherubic splendours ranging her dun gloom,
The tempests are ennobled by the state
Of high seraphic motion. I have seen
I, Merlin, have beheld. It stood in light,
It spake in sounds, for earth's gross winds too pure.
Between the midnight and the morn 'twas here;
I lay, I know not if I slept or woke,
Yet mine eyes saw. Long, long this heart had yearn'd,
Mid those rich passings and majestic shows,
For shape distinct, and clear perspicuous sound.

Visible as thou stand'st, with mastering arm
Drag down, and on his strong and baffled neck
Full trod thy iron-sandal'd heel. The sight
Was wine unto my soul, aloud I laugh'd,
And mock'd the ruinous Seraph in the clouds.
"Yet stood he in the quiet of his wrath,
Angelic Expectation, that awaits,
Calmly, till God accomplish God's high will,
Full on his brow. Then stoop'd the spear again,
And lo, Seven Steeds, like that pale One, bestrode
The patient Isle, and they that on them rode
Wore diadem and regal pall; * then rose
To war against those royal riders fierce,
From a round table, Knights in sunlike arms,
Shields bossy with rich impress quaint, and fair
Their coursers, as the fire-hoof'd steeds of Morn.
To white-arm'd Ladies in a stately court
Bards hymn'd the deeds of that fam'd chivalry, †
And their crown'd captain's title smote mine ear,
'Arthur of Bretagne.'—Years went rolling on,
Cloudy, discordant, and tempestuous years,
For the sword reap'd the harvest of the land,
And battle was the may-game of her sons.
And lo, a Raven o'er the Eastern sea ‡
Swoop'd desolation on the Isle; her wings
Blasted wheree'er they wav'd, the earth wept blood

* The Heptarchy. † The Wars of Arthur against the Saxons.
‡ The Danish Standard, the Reafan.

It burst at length, yea, front to front it stood,
The Immortal Presence. I clench'd up the dust
In the agony and rapture of my fear,
And my soul wept with terror and deep joy.
It stood upon the winds, an Angel plum'd
And mail'd and crown'd; his plumes cast forth a tinge,
Like blood, on th' air around: his arms, in shape
Etherial panoply complete, in hue
Like moonlight on the dark Llanberis lake,
A bright blue rippling glitter; for his crown,
Palm leaves of orient light his brow enwreath'd,
That bloom'd in fair divinity of wrath,
And beautiful relentlessness austere.
Knowledge was in my heart, and on my lips;
I felt him, who he was.—'Archangel! hail,
Destroyer! art not thou God's Delegate,
To break the glassy glories of this world?
The gem-knosp'd diadem, the ivory ball,
Sceptre and sword, imperial mantle broad,
The Lord of Nations, Thundershaft of war,
Are glorious on the pale submissive earth:
Thou com'st, and lo, for throne, for sword, for king,
Bare ashes and thin dust. Thou art, that aye
Smoulder'st the rich-tower'd cities to rude heaps
Of lazy moss-stones; and aye after thee
Hoots Desolation, like a dank-wing'd owl,
Upon the marble palaces of Kings.
Thou wert, when old Assyrian Nineveh

Sank to a pool of waters, waste and foul.
Thou, when the Median's brow the massy tiar
Let fall: and when the Grecian's brazen throne
Sever'd and split to the four winds: and now
Consummatest thy work of wreck and scorn,
Even on Rome's Cæsars, making the earth sick
Of its own hollowness. Archangel! Hail,
Vicegerent of destruction! Cupbearer,
That pour'st the bitter liquor of Heaven's wrath!
A lamentable homage pay I thee,
And sue thee tell, if Britain's days are full,
Her lips for thy sad beverage ripe.' Thereat
Earthward his sunny spear its lurid point
Declin'd: and lo, a White Horse, through the land
Ranging in stately speed; our city gates
Shrunk open at his coming, our fair fields
Wither'd before his fiery flashing breath.
Triumph was in the trampling of his feet,
And the strong joy of mockery, for he trod
On broken principalities; his mane
Familiar Conquest, as a rushing wind,
Fann'd in loose brilliant streamings."—"False-lipp'd
Seer,
Thou spak'st of gladness, and thy ominous tone
Is darkness and dismay."—"Hark, Warrior, hark:
That wanton mane was trail'd down to the dust,
That fiery trampling falter'd to dull dread,
That pale victorious steed, Thee, Thee I saw

In her foul talons' gripe. But he that rode
On the White Steed, the Sovereign of the Land,
(Patience, Avenger, patience!), fair was he
That Sovereign, as the virgin's spring-tide dream,
Holy as new anointed Christian Priest,
Valiant as warrior burnish'd for the fight,
Fond and ecstatic, as love-dreaming Bard,
Solemn and wise, as old Philosopher,
Stately as kingborn lion in the wood;
As he his fine face heavenward turn'd in prayer,
The Angels bent down from their throning clouds,
To wonder at that admirable King:
Sky-wandering voices peal'd in transport out—
'Alfred!' the baffled Raven cower'd aloof,
The isle look'd up to heaven in peace and joy.
"Still stood he there, betwixt me and the sun,
Th' Archangel; not in sleep, nor senselessness
Absorb'd, but terrible inaction spread
Over his innate menace. Oh, I strove,
Yet dared not hope the dregs of wrath were drain'd,
The mission of dismay fulfill'd and done.
Yet had those wings of fatal hue droop'd down
Folded and motionless, enwreathing light
Had crept and wound around that dusky spear.
At once that light fell off; at once those wings
Started asunder, and spread wide and red
The rain of desolation: thicker roll'd
The pedestal of clouds on which he stood,

As to sustain the effort of his wrath.
Again the Eastern Raven snuff'd our air,
The frantic White Horse laved his hoofs in blood:
Till from the Southern Continent sprung forth
A Leopard, on the ocean shore he ramp'd.
Woe to the White Horse, to the Raven woe,
Woe for the title of the Leopard Lord,
The Conqueror! and a Bell I heard, that sway'd
Along the isle, and froze it into peace
With its majestic tyranny of sound.*
"But he, upon the air, th' Archangel, he,
The summons of whose eye from climes remote
Beckon'd those grisly ministers of wrath,
Northward he look'd, no northern ruin came;
To th' East, there all was still; the South, nor shape
Nor sound; the West, calm stretch'd th' unruffled sea.
Ha! thought I, earth hath now no ruin more,
The race of havoc is extinct for us,
Angel of wreck, away! thy task is o'er;
Majestic Mischief, from our isle away!
He went not; as an earthquake's second shock,
With dreadful longing watch'd I what might come;
Moments were years; and lo, the Island's sons
Nor Briton they, nor Saxon, nor the stock
Of those new comers, but from each had flow'd
All qualities of honour and renown,

* The Norman Banner.—The Curfew.

The foul dishonest dregs had drain'd away,
And the rich quintessence, unmix'd, unsoil'd,
An harmony of energies sublime,
Knit in that high-brow'd people. Courtesy,
Death-scorning valour, Fame's immortal thirst,
And Honour inbreath'd like the life of life.
Then rose that strong Archangel, and he smote
The bosom of the land; at once leap'd up
That mighty people. Here a Snow-white Rose,
And there a Red, with fatal blossoming,*
And deadly fragrance, maddening all the land.
I heard, I saw—ah, impious sights and sounds!
Two war-cries in one tongue, two banner-rolls
Wov'n in one loom, two lances from one forge,
Two children from one womb, in conflict met:
'Gainst brother brother's blood cried out to heaven;
And he that rent the vizor of his foe,
Look'd through the shatter'd bars, and saw his son.
Hah, Britain! in thine entrails dost thou flesh
Thy ravine! thy Baronial castles blaze
With firebrands from their hospitable hearths.
"Mercy, I cried aloud, thou Merciless!
Destroy no more, Destroyer! Prone I fell,
And hid mine aching eyes deep in the dust;
So from my shrinking memory to shut out
Those wars unnatural. Pass'd a sound at length

* Wars of York and Lancaster.

As of a Wild Boar hunted to his death; *
I rais'd mine head, still there the Archangel stood;
Another pause, another gleam of hope.
But in that quiet interval me-seem'd
Trumpetings, as of victory from the sea,
Flow'd o'er the Isle, and glories beam'd abroad
From a triumphant throne, where sate elate
A Virgin: all around her Poets' harps
Strew'd flowers of amaranth blooming; and methought
Joy rose and solemn welcoming in Heaven
Of a pure incense, that from all the Isle
Soar'd to the unapproached throne of God.†
"Then saw I through the Isle, a River broad
And full, and they that drank thereof look'd up,
Like children dropt forth from a nobler world,
So powerful that proud water work'd within,
Freshening the body and the soul: and each
Courage array'd and a frank simple strength.
The river's name was Freedom: her fair tide
So pleasant thrall'd mine eye, I saw not rise
Th' Archangel's spear: th' earth's reeling woke me then.
For lo, upon a thone, a gallant Prince,‡
That with misguided sceptre strove to check
That powerful stream: at which the rebel tide

* Battle of Bosworth, death of Richard.
The bristly boar in infant gore
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.—GRAY.
† Elizabeth and the Reformation.
‡ Charles the First.

Swell'd up with indignation, and aloof
Stood gathering its high-cresting waves; down came
The deluge, that fair throne, and all its strong
Nobility of pillars, with a crash
Fell to the earth; while they that drank rush'd forth
Inebriate with excess of that fierce stream,
And cast a bloody sacrifice, that head
Endiadem'd with royalty, to glut
The tide implacable. 'Tis sad to hear,
Aye Samor, what was it to see! Brave Chief,
Cold winter leads the pleasant summer on,
The night must darken ere the morning dawn.
The summer came, the morning dawn'd: I saw
The arch'd heavens open o'er the angelic shape,
And upward, like a cloud, he mingled in
To the sky's cloudiness. I cried aloud
'For ever!' the close settling in the heaven
Seem'd to reply 'For ever.' Not with him
Pass'd off my vision fair. Another throne
Stood by the venturous margin of that stream;
Then merriment, and loose harp'd wantonness
Smooth'd the late ruffled air; immodest tones,
To which fair forms in dancing motion swam:
They paus'd, then dark around that throne it seem'd,
Whereat those holy hymns that scarce had ceas'd
To float up in their airy-winged course,
Fainting, began to tremble and break off.*

* Court of Charles II.

That stream again collected its full wrath,
And foamy menace. When behold, a fleet
Came tilting o'er the ocean waves, and cast
A Princess and a Warrior on the shore,
And kingly crowns * around their brows august
Out blossom'd. On the throne they took their seat;
Soar'd gladness on the wings of those pure hymns;
And the majestic stream in sunlight flow
And full rejoicing murmur, all its waves
Wafted around the high unshaken throne.
Now listen with thy soul, not with thine ears,
Briton! beside that stream a Tree sprang out,
With ever-mounting height, and amplitude
Aye-spreading; deep in earth its gnarled roots
Struck down, as though to strengthen this frail world:
Its crown amid the clouds seem'd soaring up
To calmness high above our troubled sphere.
And its broad branches spread so wide, its shade
Lay upon distant realms; one golden bright,
Close by the cradle of the infant sun,
And others in new western worlds remote;
And from that mystic river, Freedom, flow'd
A moisture like the sap of life, that fed
And fertilized the spacious Tree; the gales
Of ocean with a gorgeous freshness flush'd
The beauty of its foliage. Blossoms rare

* William and Mary. The Revolution of 1688.

Were on it; holy deeds, that in the airs
Of heaven delicious smelt, and fruits on earth
Shower'd from it; making its sad visage smile,
For life and hope and bliss were in their taste.
Amid the state of boughs twin Eagles built
Their eyries, Victory and Renown, and swung
In rapturous sport with the tumultuous winds,
But birds obscene Dishonour, Shame, Dismay,
Scar'd by the light of the bright leaves, aloof
Far wheel'd their sullen flight, nor dar'd to stoop.
I saw the nations graft their wasted trunks
From those broad boughs of beauty and of strength,
And dip their drain'd urns in that sacred stream.
But underneath its holiest shade there stood
A Throne, an Altar, and a Senate-house.
Upon the throne a King sate, triple-crown'd
As by three kingdoms; voices eloquent,
In harmony of discord, fulmin'd forth
From that wise Senate: in swift intercourse
To and fro from heaven's crystal battlements
To that pure altar Angels stoop'd their flight.
And through the sunny boughs Philosophers
Held commerce with the skies, and drew from thence
The stars to suffer their sage scrutiny;
And Poets sent up through th' embowering vault
Such wond'rous harmonies, the charm'd air seem'd
Forgetful of its twinkling motion dim.
"Oh, admirable Tree! thou shalt not fall

By foreign axe, or slow decay within!
The tempests strengthen thee; the summer airs
Corrupt not, but adorn. Until that tide,
Freedom, the Inexhaustible, exhaust,
Lives thy coeval Immortality."
The Prophet ceas'd: still Samor on his face,
That in solemnity of firm appeal
Look'd heavenward, with a passionate belief
Gaz'd, and a glad abandonment. "Ha, Seer,
But now when thou begann'st 'twas noon of day,
And now deep night. Yea, Merlin, and by night
The Tamer of the White Steed must go forge
His iron curb." Forth like a cataract
He burst, and bounded down the mountain side.
"Yet once again, tumultuous world, I plunge
Amid thy mad abyss; thou proud and fierce,
I come to break and tame thee! see ye not,
Wise Hengist! strong Caswallon! how the sand
Is under your high-towering thrones, the worm
Is in your showy palms." And then a pause
Of tumult and proud trembling in his soul.
And, "False it was not, but a gleam vouchsaf'd
From the eternal orb of truth, the sense
That inbred and ingrain'd with my soul's life,
Hath made of Britain to this leaping heart
A name not only to be deeply lov'd,
But full of pride and majesty. I feel,
And from my earliest consciousness have felt,

That in the wide hereafter, where old Fate
Broods o'er the unravelling web of human things,
Wov'n by the Almighty, spreads thy tissue broad
In light, among the dark and mazy threads:
Vicissitude or mutability
Quench not its desolate lustre, on it winds
Unbroken, unattainted, unobscur'd."
So pass'd he, who had seen, him then had deem'd,
By the proud steedlike tossing of his crest,
His motion like the uncheck'd August sun
Travelling the cloudless vacancy of air,
A monarch for his summer pastime gone
Into the shady grove, with courtier train,
And plumed steed, and laden sumpter mule,
Cool canopy, and velvet carpeting.
But he beneath the sleety winter sky,
Even his hard arms bit into by the keen
And searching airs, houseless, by hazard found
His coarse irregular fare, his drink, the ice
Toilsomely broken from the stiff black pool.
The furr'd wolf in the mossy oaken trunk
Lapp'd himself from the beating snow, but on
Went Samor with unshivering naked foot.
The tempest from the mountain side tore down
The pine, like a scath'd trophy casting it
To moulder in the vale, but Samor's brow
Fronted the rude sky. The free torrent felt
The ice its rushing turbulence o'ergrow,

Translucent in its cold captivity
It hung, but Samor burst the invading frost
Of cold despair from his free soul, and mov'd
Uncheck'd along his deep unfathom'd course.
And thou, wild Deva,* how hast thou foregone
Thy summer music, and thy sunny play
Of eddies whitening 'mid thy channel stones.
Bard-belov'd river, on whose green-fring'd brink
The imaginative Grecian sure had feign'd
'Twixt thy smooth Naiads, and the Sylvans rude
Of thy grey woods, stol'n amorous intercourse.
With such a slow reluctance thou delay'st
Under the dipping branches, that flap up,
With every shifting motion of the wind,
Thy limpid moisture, and with serpent coil
Dost seem as thou would'st mingle with thyself
To wander o'er again the same lov'd course.
Now lies thy ice-bound bosom mute and flat
As marble pavement, thy o'ershadowing woods
One bare, brown leaflessness, that faintly drop
At intervals the heavy icicles,
Like tears upon a monumental stone.
But though thy merry waters and brisk leaves
Are silent, with their close-couch'd birds of song;
Even in this blank dead season, music loves

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* The Dee.

Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.

MILTON'S LYCIDAS.

Thy banks, and sounds harmonious must be heard
Even o'er thy frozen waters. 'Twas a hymn,
From a low chapel by the river side,
Came struggling through the thick and hazy air;
And made a gushing as of tears flow o'er
The Wanderer's soul; the form winds could not bow,
Nor crazing tempests, those soft sounds subdue;
Those dews of music melt into the frame
Of adamant, proof against the parching frost.
Under the porch he glided in, and knelt
Unnotic'd in the throng: whose motion sway'd
The beasts of ravine, he before his God
Wore nought distinctive; save of those bruis'd reeds
Was he the sorest bruis'd; and deepest seem'd
The full devotion settling round his heart.
More musical than the music, on that soul,
So long inured to savage scenes and wild,
Came the sensation of a face belov'd.
The calm of that old reverend brow, the glow
Of its thin silver locks, was like a flash
Of sunlight in the pauses of a storm.
For lo! the white stol'd Bishop lifting up
His arms, his parting benison descends
Like summer rain upon his flock. Whose ear,
Oh, holy Germain, felt thy gentle tones
As Samor's? ah, when last thy saintly brow
For him look'd heavenward, and less tremulous then
Thy voice on him breath'd blessing, 'twas in times

Far brighter, at that jocund bridal hour
When Emerie, rosy between shame and joy,
Stood with him by the altar side:—"Thus live
In love till life's departure;"—Such thy prayer!
Vain prayer! and blessing ne'er to be enjoyed!
The throng hath parted; in the House of God
Still knelt the armed man; with pressure strong
He clasp'd old Germain's hand—"Good Bishop, thou
Art skill'd in balancing our earthly sins.
I was a man, whose high ambitious head
Seem'd among God's bright stars; I deem'd this earth
A lowly place, whose dust my feet shook off
With an heaven-gifted scorn; so far, so high
Seem'd I above its tainting elevate.
At midnight, on my slumber came the sin;
I will not say how exquisite and fair;
Mine eyelids sprung apart to drink it in,
My soul leap'd up to clasp it, and the folds
Of passion, like a fiery robe, wrapt in
My nature: I had fall'n, but bounteous Heaven
Of its most blest permitted one t' extend
A snow-white arm of rescue."—"The hot tears
Corrode and fret the warrior's brazen helm;
I will not ask thee if thine outward eyes,
Hath thy soul wept?"—"Aye, Bishop, tears of blood;
Sorrow and shame weigh'd down my nerveless arm,
And clipp'd th' aspiring plumage of my soul;
Within mine own heart scorn hiss'd at me."—"Well,

Strong Man of arms! hast fought the inward fight,
And God remit thy sins, as I remit."
"Then take thou to thine arms thy ancient friend."
So saying, up rose Samor, like a star
Out of the ocean, shining his bright face
With the pure dews of penitence. But he,
The old man, fell upon his neck and wept,
As though th' endearing name, "my Son," were voic'd
By nature, not by saintly use; a sound
Not of the lips, but th' overflowing heart.
Their's was a broken conference, drear thoughts
Of anguish, desolation, and despair,
So moulded up with recollections sweet,
They made the sunken visage smile through tears.
'Tis th' one poor luxury the wretched have
To speak of wretchedness—yet brief their speech,
"Vengeance and Vigilance," the stern adieu
Even in that hoary Bishop's ear, he parts.
But by the Bishop's side, just there where knelt
Th' Avenger, a new form: 'twas man in garb,
But the thin fringing of the humid eye,
The delicate wanderings of the rosy veins,
The round full alabaster of the skin,
The briefness of the modest sliding step,
Something of womanly composure smooth,
Even in the close and girt habiliments,
Belied the stern appearance.—"Priest, with him
But now who parted, is my soul allied

In secret, close society; his faith
Must be my faith, his God my God."—"Fair youth,
I question not by what imperious tie
Of admiration or strong love thou'rt led;
For as the Heavens with silent power intense
Draw upward the light mists and fogs of earth,
And, steeping them in glory, hang them forth
Fresh, renovate, and radiant; virtue holds
The like attractive influence, draws around
Souls light and earthly-tainted, till they catch
The fair contagion of her beauty, beam
With her imparted light. Hear, heathen youth,
Hear and believe." As when beneath the nave
Tall arching, the Cathedral organ 'gins
Its prelude, lingeringly exquisite
Within retir'd, the bashful sweetness dwells;
Anon like sunlight, or the floodgate rush
Of waters, bursts it forth, clear, solemn, full:
It breaks upon the mazy fretted roof;
It coils up round the clustering pillars tall;
It leaps into the cell-like chapels; strikes
Beneath the pavement sepulchres; at once
The living temple is instinct, ablaze
With the uncontrolled exuberance of sound.
So with persuasive gentleness began
The mitred Preacher, winning audience close:
Then rising up, the rapid argument
Soar'd to the Empyrean, linking earth

With heaven by golden chains of eloquence;
Till the mind with its faculties and powers
Lay floating, self-surrender'd in the deep
Of admiration. Wondrous 'twas to see,
With the transitions of the Holy Creed,
The workings of that regular bright face;
Now ashy blank, now glittering bright, now dew'd
With fast sad tears, now with a weeping smile,
Now heavy with droop'd eyelids, open now
With forehead arch'd in rapture; 'till at last
Listening she stood with mute suspended breath.
But as the voice severe wound up the strain,
And from the heavenly history to enforce
The everlasting moral, 'gan extort,
From the noviciate in the jealous faith,
Passionless purity, and life sincere
From all the soft indulgences of sin;
Forbidden in the secret heart to shrine
A dear unlawful image, to reserve
A sad and narrow sanctuary for desire:
Then stood in speechlessness, yet suppliant,
With snowy arms outstretch'd, and quivering loose,
The veiling mantle thrown in anguish back,
Confest the Woman: starting from their band,
Like golden waters o'er a marble bed,
Flow'd out her long locks o'er her half-bare neck.
"To tell me that in such cold solemn tones,
All, all unwelcome, bitter as it is,

I must believe, for its oppressive truth
Loads my lost soul, and he believes it all:
To tell it me here, here, where all around
Linger his vestiges, where the warm air
Yet hath the motion of his breath, the sound
Of his departing footsteps beating yet
Upon my heart. Long sought! and found in vain!
In sunshine have I sought thee and in shade;
O'er mountain have I track'd thee, and through vale;
The clouds have wrapp'd thee, but I lost thee not,
The torrents drown'd thy track, but not from me,
I dared not meet thee, but I sought thee still:
To me forbid, alone to me, what all
The coarse and common things of nature may;
The airs of heaven may touch thee, I may not;
All human eyes behold thee—all but mine.
And thou, the senseless, enviable dust!
May'st cherish the round traces of his limbs,
His fresh fair image must away from me.
Oh that I were the dust whereon thou tread'st,
Even though I felt thee not!"—And is this she,
The Virgin of the festal hall, who won
A kingdom for a smile, nor deign'd regard
Its winning, and who stoop'd to be a Queen?
And is this she, whose coming on the earth
Was like the morn in her impearled car,
Loftiest or loveliest which, 'twere bold to say?
She whose enamouring scorn fell, luxury-like,

On her beholders, blest in her contempt ?
This she, the Lady of her summer bark,
To whom the sunshine and the airs, and all
Th' inconstant waters play'd the courtier smooth ;
That cast a human feeling of delight,
At her bewitching presence, o'er the blind
Unconscious forms of nature ? Is this she !
Those rich lips, for a monarch's banquet meet,
Visiting the dust with frantic kiss ; thus low,
Thus desolate, thus fallen, of her fall
Careless, so deep in shame, yet unasham'd !
But thou, Heaven-reconcil'd, on earth the seal'd,
The anointed by the prophet's gladdening oils,
God's instrument ! hath midnight now resum'd
Its spirit-wafting function ? Emeric, she
On earth so mild, in her had anger seem'd
Unnatural as a war-song on a lute,
As blood upon the pinion of a dove.
In heaven hath she her heavenly qualities
Unlearnt ? is she the angel now in all
But its best part, forgiveness ? Wherefore then
Does Samor from his mossy pillow, stretch'd
Under the oak, uplift his head, and then
Like one bliss-overcome, subside again ?
Half sleep, half sense he lies, his nuptial hymn,
Articulate each gay and dancing word,
Distinct each delicate and dwelling fall,
Is somewhere in the air about him ; looks

Are on him of a bashful eye, too fond
To turn away, too timorous to fix
And rest unwavering. All the marriage rite
Is acting now anew; the sunlight falls
Upon the gold-clasp'd book of prayer, as then
It fell, and Germain speaks as Germain spake.
And Emeric, on her cheek the tear is there,
Where then it hung in lucid trembling bright;
The very fluttering of her yielded hand,
When gliding up her finger small the ring
Made her his own for ever, throbs again
Upon his sensitive touch. He dares not move
Lest he should break the lovely bubble frail,
His tranc'd eyes stir not, lest they rove away
From that delicious sight; his open hand
Lies pulseless, lest the slightest change disturb
That exquisite sensation; so he lies,
Knowing all false, yet feeling all as true.
And it was false, yet why? that is indeed,
Which is to sense and sight. Ah, well beseems
Us, the strong insects of an April morn;
Steady and constant as the thistle's down
When winds are on it; lasting as the flake
Of spring snow on the warm and grassy ground:
Well beseems us, ourselves, our forms, our lives,
The earth we tread on, and the air we breathe,
The light and glassy peopling of a dream;
T' arraign our visions for their perishing,

And on their unreality to rail,
Ungrateful to the illusion, that deceives
To rapture; and unwise, to cast away
Sweet flowers because they are not amaranth.
Thou, Samor, nor ungrateful nor unwise,
That, 'scaping from this cold and dark below,
Dost spread thee out for thy peculiar joy
A land of fair imaginings, with shapes,
And sounds, and motions, and sweet stillnesses
Dost give up all the moon beholds to woe
And tumult, but in some far quiet sphere
Findest thyself a pure companionship
With spirits thou did'st love, and who lov'd thee
While passionate and earthly sense was theirs.

BOOK IX.

ARGUMENT.

Ubiquity of the Avenger. Caswallon in Caer Ebranc (York). Samor. Banks of the Eamont. Vortimer. Samor. The ruins of Samor's Palace near the Bright City (Gloucester). Scene of the Massacre on Salisbury Plain.

WHO tracks the ship along the sea of storms?
Who through the dark haste of the wintry clouds
Pierces to where the planet, in retired
And constant motion, the blue arch of heaven
Traverses? Sometimes, on the mountain top
Of some huge wave, the reappearing bark
Takes its high stand, with pennon fluttering far
And cautious sail half furl'd, yet eminent,
As of th' assaulting element in disdain.
Sometimes amid the darkness falling off,
And scattering from its crystal sphere away,
Bursts out the argent orb refresh'd, and shows
Its lamp unquenchable. Thou, Voyager
'Mid the rude waves of desolation! Star

Of Britain's gloomy night! so bafflest thou
My swift poetic vision! now the waves
Ride o'er thee, now the clouds devour thee up;
And thou art lost to sight, and dare I say
Lost to thy immortality of song.
Thee too anon I see emerging proud
From the dusk billows of calamity,
That, swoln and haughty from the recent wreck
Of thy compatriot navy, thee assail
With their accumulated weight of surge.
Thou topp'st some high-brow'd wave, and shaking off
On either side their fury, brandishest
Thy solitary banner. Thee I see,
Within th' embosoming midnight of the land,
On gliding with smooth motion undisturb'd,
And through the glimpses of the breaking gloom,
Sometimes a solemn beauty sheddest forth
On the distemper'd face of human things.
Full in the centre of Caer Ebranc * stood
A temple, by the August Severus† rear'd
To Mavors the Implacable; what time
That Cæsar stoop'd his eagles on the wreck
Of British freedom, when the mountaineer,
The King of Morven, if old songs be sooth,

* York.

† The Emperor Severus died at York. The remains of Roman antiquities in that city and in other parts of Britain, may perhaps justify this description.

Fingal, from Carun's bloody flashing waves
Shook the fled Roman on his new-built wall;
And Ossian woke up on his hill of dreams,
And spread the glory of his song abroad,
To halo round his sceptred Hero's head.*
But not the less his work of pride pursued
Th' imperial Roman; up the pillars rose,
Slow lengthening out their long unbroken lines;
In delicate solidity advanc'd,
And stately grace, toward the sky, till met
By the light massiveness of roof, that sloped
Down on their flowery capitals. Nor knew
That man of purple and of diadem
The Universal Architect at work,
Framing for him a narrow building dark,
The grave's lone building. Th' emperor, and his bones,
Into the blank of things forgot and past
Had moulder'd; but this proud enduring pile,
By wild weeds overgrown, by yellow hues
Of age deep tinted, still a triumph wrought

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* Fingal, whose fame, with that of his heroes and bards, has been revived in our language, by a recent publication, is said to have commanded the Caledonians in that memorable juncture, to have eluded the power of Severus, and to have obtained a signal victory on the banks of the Carun, in which the son of *the King of the world*, Caracul, fled from his arms along the field of his pride. Gibbon, ch. VI. vol. i. p. 220. Edit. 1839.

If Gibbon might indulge the pleasing supposition that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung, this was at least good poetic authority for adopting this notion.

O'er time, and Christian disregard; and stood
As though to mock its builder's perishing.
Upon the eastern pediment stood out
A bold relief, where the tumultuous stone
Was nobly wrought into a fit device
For th' immortal Homicide within: it showed
His coming on the earth; the God had burst
The gates of Janus, that fell shattering back
Behind him, from the wall the rearing steeds
Sprung forth, and with their stony hoofs the air
Insulted. Them Bellona urg'd, abroad
Her snaky locks from her bare wrinkled brow
Went scattering; forward th' haggard charioteer
Lean'd, following to the coursers' reeking flanks
The furrowing scourge with all herself, and hung
Over their backs half fury, and half joy,
As though to listen to their bruising hoofs,
That trampled the thick massacre. Erect
Behind, with shield drawn in and forward spear,
The con'd helm finely shaped to th' arching brow,
The God stood up within the car, that seem'd
To rush whenever the fleet wind swept by.
His brow was glory, and his arm was power,
And a smooth immortality of youth,
Like freshness from Elysium newly left,
Touch'd with a beauty to be shudder'd at
His massy shape, a lightning-like fierce grace,
That makes itself admir'd, whilst it destroys.

There on a throne, fronting the morning sun,
Caswallon sate; his sceptre a bright sword
Unsheath'd; with savage art had he broke up
His helmet to the likeness of a crown,
On which uncouthly set and clustering bright
Rich jewels glitter'd. To his people, rang'd
Upon the steps of marble sloping down,
Barbaric justice minist'ring, he sate,
Expounding th' absolute law of his own will;
And from the abject at his feet receiv'd
Homage that seem'd like worship. Not alone
From his wild people, but from lips baptiz'd,
Came titles that might make the patient Heavens
Burst to the utterance of a laughing scorn;
Might wake up from the bosom of the grave
A bitter and compassionate contempt,
To hear the inheritance of her dull worms,
Nam'd in his dauntless and unblushing style
"Unconqu'rable! Omnipotent! Supreme!"
But all along the ranging column files,
And all abroad the turgid laudings spread,
"Unconqu'rable! Omnipotent! Supreme!"
Yet he, the Stranger, whom Prince Malwyn leads,
He bows not, those hymn'd flatteries seem to jar
Upon his sense, so high his head he bears
Above them, like a man constrain'd to walk
Amid low tufts of poisonous herbs; he fronts
The monarch and begins his taunting strain:

"Unconqu'rable! whose conquering is the wolf's,
That when the shifting battle rages yet,
Steals to some desert corner of the field,
And riots on the spoils. Omnipotent!
Aye, as a passive weapon, wielded now,
Now cast away contemptuous, for the dust
To canker and to rust around. Supreme!
O'er whom is Ruin on its vulture wings,
Scoffing the bubble whereupon thou rid'st,
And waiting Hengist's call to swoop, and pierce,
And dissipate its swoln and airy pride.
Whose diadem of glory, sword of power,
Even breath of life, at Hengist's wayward will,
Cling to thee, ready at his beck to fade,
And shiver, and expire."—"At Hengist's call!
At Hengist's beck! at Hengist's!"—the word chok'd;
With eyes that glared upon the Stranger's face,
Yet so by wrath bewilder'd, they had lost
Distinction, rose Caswallon. From the wall
A lance he seiz'd, huge as a pine-tree stem,
That on Blencathara stands sheer 'gainst heaven's storms:
Far o'er all heads a long and rapid flight
It cut along the air, till almost fail'd
The sight to track it to its ponderous fall.
Then taking on his throne his quiet seat,
"Back, back to Hengist, say my lance flies thus,
Bid him o'ercast it, then come here again
To menace at Caswallon."—"Soft and weak,

(Pursued the unwondering Stranger) know'st thou not,
There is a strength, that is not of the arm,
Nor standeth in the muscles' sinewy play?
It striketh, but its striking is unseen,
It wieldeth, what it wieldeth seeming yet
Sway'd by its own free motion. King, I say,
Thou stepp'st not, speak'st not, but obedient still
To Hengist's empire, thou'rt a dog that hunts
But as thy master slips thee on his game,
A bridled steed that vaunteth as his own
His rider's prowess."—"Hah! I know thee now,
Insolent outcast, Samor!"—"And I thee,
Self-outcast, once a Briton—oh thou fall'n
When most thou séem'st exalted, oh most base
When most ennobled, a most pitiful slave
When bearing thee most lordly! Briton once!
Ay, every clod of earth that makes a part
Of this isle's round, each leaf of every tree,
And every wave of every streamlet brook,
Should look upon thee with a mother's glance,
And speak unto thee with a mother's voice.
But thou, most impious and unnatural son,
Hast sold thy mother to the shame and curse
Of foreign lust, hast knit a league to rend
And sever her, most proud if some torn limb
Be cast thee for thy lot." Then rose again
Caswallon, from his brow the crown took off,
And placing it in Samor's hand—"I read

Thy purpose, and there 's fire in't, by my throne!
Now, Samor, place that crown upon my head,
Do me thy homage, kneeling, as thy king,
And thou and I will have a glorious tilt
At these proud Saxons. Turn not off; may boys
Gild their young javelins in Caswallon's blood,
And women pluck me by the beard, if e'er
On other terms I league with thee." The crown
Samor received, and Samor look'd to heaven,
And Samor bow'd his knee,—" Almighty God,
If thine eternal thunderbolts are yet
Unweary of their function dire, if earth
Yet, yet have not exhausted and consum'd
Thy flame-wing'd armoury of wrath, reserve
Some signal and particular revenge
For this man's head; so this foul earth shall learn,
Ere doomsday, that the sin, whose monstrous shape
Doth most offend thy pure and sensitive sight,
Is to bear arms against our native land.
Make thou of him a monumental ruin,
To publish in the ages long remote,
That sometimes is thy red right hand uplift
Against the living guilty." And to earth,
Upleaping, Samor dash'd the crown; the gems
Lay starry on the pavement white. On high
Caswallon the rear'd sword of justice swung,
Heavy with death, above the Avenger's head.
But he—" Caswallon, hold thine hand, here, here,

Thy warrant for my safety, by thy son
A poniard given, upon his heart to wreak
All evil done myself." With bosom bare
Stood Malwyn by the Avenger's side. But he
Viewing that downy skin empurpled o'er
With youth's light colouring, and his constant mien,
Cast down the dagger, and "Fall what fall may,
Excellent boy, my hand shall still be white
From blood of thine." Like wild-boar in his rush
Baffled, or torrent check'd, Caswallon paus'd—
"Now, Christian, where learnt thou the art to wrest
My vengeance from me?—Go, go, I may strike,
If the fit fire me.—By Andraste, boy,
Boy Malwyn, there's thy father in thy blood.
Hah, Samor, thou hast 'scaped me now, erewhile
I'll make a footstool of thy neck, to mount
On Britain's throne: alive or dead, I'll have
A knee as supple, and a front as low
From thee, as any of my milk-fed slaves:
Go, go." And Malwyn led the Avenger forth
Along the dull and sleepy shore of Ouse,
Till all Caer Ebranc's sounds flagged on his ear,
And all its towers had dwindled from his sight.
Ere parting, Malwyn clasp'd his hand, and tears
Hung in his eyelids. "Oh, thou know'st not yet
How Hengist sways my father's passive mind!
My sister, my sweet Lilian, she whose sight
Made mine eyes tremble, whom I've stol'n to see,

Despite my father's stern command, asleep
With parted lips, and snowy breathing skin:
Scarce knew she me, her brother; her knew I
So only that my spirit yearn'd to mix
With hers in fondness, she, even she, the soft,
The innocent, a wolf had lov'd her; she
Hath felt the drowning waters o'er her close,
Fair victim of a hellish sacrifice."
After a troubled silence, spake the Chief:
"Malwyn, my Christian pupil, God will give
The lov'd on earth another meeting place;
Adieu, remember, Vengeance, Vigilance."—
The Spring had made an early effort faint,
T' encroach upon the Winter's ancient reign;
And she had lur'd forth from the glittering earth
The snowdrop and pale cowslip, th' elder tree
And hawthorn their green buds shot out, yet fear'd
T' entrust the rude air with their dainty folds.
A fresh green sparkled where the snow had been,
And here and there a bird on the bare spray
Warbled a timorous welcome, and the stream
Of Eamont, as rejoicing to be free,
Went laughing down its sunny silvering course.
The only wintry thing on Eamont's shore
Is human; powerless are the airs that touch
To breathing and to kindling the dead earth,
Powerless the dewy trembling of the sun,
To melt around the heart of Vortimer

The snow that flakes and curdles there—that bank,
That little bank of fair and cherish'd turf,
Whereupon his head reclines, ah, doth not rest!
By its round swelling, likest were a grave,
Save that 'twere brief and narrow for all else
But fairy, or those slender watery shapes
That dance beneath the stream. Yet there the Spring
Hath dropp'd her first, her tenderest bloom; the airs
Find the first flowery odours on that spot;
Cowslip is there and primrose faint and pale,
The daisy and the violet's blue eyes,
Peeping from out the shaking grass. The step
Of Samor wakens the pale slumberer there.
He lifts his lean hands up, and parts away
The matting hair from o'er his eyes, which look
As though the painful sunlight wilder'd them.
Save that a shepherd's scrip lay near, had seem'd
That man ne'er ventured there; that every sound
Was strange and foreign, save the pendant arms
Swinging above with heavy knolling din.
But Samor's presence made a sudden break
In his fantastic frenzy's wonted thoughts;
He motion'd first with bony arm, then spake.
"Away, away, thou'rt fearful, thou'lt disturb,
Away with thy arm'd head and iron heel,
She will not venture, while thy aspect fierce
Haunts hereabout, she cannot brook a sound,
Nor any thing that 's rude, and dark, and harsh,

Nor any voice, nor any look but mine.
She will not rise, if thou art lingering here;
Hard and discourteous man, why seek to keep
My own, my buried from me? why prevent
The smiling intercourse of those that love?"—
"Sad man, what mean'st thou?"—"Speak not, but begone.
I tell thee, she's beneath, I laid her there,
And she'll come up to me, I know she will,
Trembling and slender, soft and rosy pale.
I know it, all things sound, and all things smile,
As when she wont to meet me."—"Woeful youth,
The dead shall never rise but once."—"And why?
The primrose that was dead, I saw it shed
Its leaves, and now again 'tis fresh and fair;
The swallow, fled on gliding wing away,
Like a departing spirit, see it skims
The waters; the white dormouse, that went down
Into its cave, hath been abroad; the stream,
That was so silent, hark! its murmuring voice
Is round about us; Lilian too, to meet
The voices and the breathing things she lov'd,
Amid the sunshine and the springing joy
Will rise again."—"Kind Heaven, I should have known,
Though rust-embrown'd yon breast-plate, and yon helm,
I should have known, though furrowy, sunk and wan,
That face, though bowed and wasted, that tall form.
Prince Vortimer! in maiden or in child

Fancies so sick and wild had been most sad,
But in a martial and renowned chief
Might force unwonted pity from a fiend;
Oh, much abus'd! much injur'd! well, too well
Hath that fell man the deed of evil wrought."—
"Man, man! then there is man, whose blood will flow,
Whose flesh will quiver under the keen steel,
Samor!" And up he leap'd, as though he flung
Like a dead load the dreamy madness off.
"Samor! thou tranquil soul! that walk'st abroad
With thy calm reason, and thy cloudless face
Unchangeable, as a cold midnight star.
Thou scarce wilt credit, I have found a joy
In hurling stones down on that glassy tide;
And with an angry and quick-dashing foot
Breaking the senseless smoothness, that methought
Smiled wickedly upon me, and rejoic'd
At its own guilt and my calamity.
But oh, on mortal thing that feels and bleeds,
And shrieks, and shudders, with avenging arm
To spring! Where is't and who? good Samor, tell."
And Samor told the tale, and thus—"Brave youth,
Not only from yon narrow turf come up
From Britain's every hill, and glen, and plain,
Deep voices that invoke thee, Vortimer,
To waken from thy frenzied rest. Thy arm
No selfish, close, and singular revenge

Must nerve and freshen; in thy country's cause,
Not in thy own, that fury must be wreak'd."
His answer was the brandishing his sword,
Which he had rent down from th' o'erhanging bough,
And the infuriate riot of his eye.
"Oh, perilous your hazard," still went on
Samor, "ye foes of freedom, ye take off
Heaven's bonds from all our fiercer part of man;
Ye legalize forbidden thoughts, the thirst
Of blood make seem a duty, give the hue
Of honour and self-admiration proud,
To passions moody, dark, unreconcil'd:
This Pagan vengeance almost sanctify
T' a Christian virtue; and our prayers, that mount
Unto the throne of God, though harshly toned
With imprecations, take their flight uncheck'd."
But Vortimer upon the grassy bank
Had fall'n, "Not long, sweet spirit, oh not long,
Shall violets be wanting on thy grave."
Yet unaccompanied the Avenger pass'd,—
As though the wonted dark and solemn words,
"Vengeance and Vigilance," had fix'd him there,
Prince Vortimer remains by Eamont side.
Samor! the cities hear thy lonely voice,
Thy lonely tread is in the quiet vale,
Thy lonely arm, amid his deep trench'd camp,
The Saxon hears upon some crashing helm
Breaking in thunder and in death. But thee,

Why see I thee by Severn side? what soft
And indolent attraction wiles thee on,
Even on this cold and gusty April day,
To the sad desert of thy ancient home?
Why mingle for thyself the wormwood cup?
Why plunge into the fount of bitterness?
Or why, with sad indulgence, pamper up,
Wilful, the moody sorrow, and relax
Thy high-strung spirit? Oh, so near, no power
Hath he to pass from those old scenes away,
He must go visit every spot belov'd,
And think on joys, no more to be enjoy'd.
  Ruin is there, but ruin slow and mild,
The spider's wandering web is thin and grey
On roof and wall, here clings the dusky bat,
And, where his infants' voices us'd to sound,
The owlet's sullen flutter and dull chirp
Come o'er him; on his hospitable hearth
The blind worm and slow beetle crawl their round.
Yet is no little, light, and trivial thing,
Without its tender memory; first with kiss,
Long and apparent sweet, the primrose bed
He visits, where that graceful girl is laid.
Then roves through every chamber; eye, and ear,
And soul, all full of her, that is not there:
Emeric haunts everywhere, there's not a door
Her thin form hath not glided through, no stone
Upon the chequer'd marble where her foot

Hath never glanc'd, no window whence her eyes
Have never gaz'd for him; the walls have heard
Her voice; her touch, now deathly cold, hath been
Warm on so many things; there hangs, even now,
The lute from whence those harmonies she drew,
So spherelike sweet, they seem'd to drop from heaven.
There, where the fox came starting out but now,
There, circled with her infants, did she sit.
And here the bridal couch, the couch of love,
A little while, and then the bed of death.
And lo that holy scroll of parchment, stamp'd
With many a sentence of the word of God,
Still open, Samor could not choose but read
In large and brilliant characters emblaz'd,
The Preacher's "Vanity of vanities."
How like is grief to pleasure! here to stay
One day, one night, to see the eve sink down
Into the water, with its wonted fall,
'Tis strange temptation—and to gather up
Sad relics. And the visionary night!
How will its airy forms come sliding down,
Here, where is old familiar footing all,
'Tis strange temptation.—But the White-horse flag
Pass'd waving o'er his sight, at once he thought
Of that seal'd day of destiny, when his foot
Should trample on its neck, and burst away.
Oh secret traveller o'er a ruin'd land,
Yet once more must I seek thee 'mid the drear,

The desolate, the dead. On Ambri plain,
On Murder's blasted place of pride. It seem'd
At distance like a favour'd meadow, bright
With richer herbage than the moorland brown
Around it; the luxurious weeds look'd boon,
And glanc'd their many colours, fleck'd with dew.
Seen nearer, scatter'd all around appear'd
Few relics of that sumptuous feast, the wrecks
Of lifeless things, that gaily glitter'd still,
While all the living had been dark so long.
Fragments of banners, and pavilion shreds,
Or broken goblet here and there, or ring,
Or collar on that day how proudly worn!
A stol'n and hurried burying had there been.
Here had the pious workman, as disturb'd
At his imperfect toil, left struggling out
A hand, whose bleach'd bones seem'd even yet to grasp
The earth, so early, so untimely left.
And here the grey flix of the wolf, here black
Lay feathers of the obscene raven's wing,
Shewing, where they had marr'd the fruitless toil.
And uncouth stones bore here and there a name,
Haply the vaunted heritage of kings.
It was a sad and stricken place; though day
Was in the heaven, and the fresh grass look'd green,
The light was wither'd; nor was silence there
A soothing quiet; busy 'twas, and chill
And piercing, rather absence of strong sound,

Than stillness, like the shivering interval
Between the pauses of a passing bell.
Oh Britain! what a narrow space confines
Thy powerful and thy princely! that grey earth
Was what adorn'd and made thee proud; the fair,
Whose beauty was the rapture of thy maids,
The treasure of thy mothers; and the brave,
Whose constant valour was thy wall of strength;
The wealthy, whose air-gilding palace towers
Made thee a realm of glory to detain
The noon-day sun in his career; thy wise,
Whose grave and solemn argument controll'd
Thy councils; and thy mighty, whose command
Was law in thy strong cities. Beauty, wealth,
Might, valour, wisdom, mingled and absorb'd
In one cold similarity of dust,
One layer of white and silent ashes all.
The air breathes of mortality; abroad
A spirit seems to hover, pouring in
Dim thoughts of Doomsday to the soul; steal up
Voiceless sensations of eternity
From the blank earth. Oh, is it there beneath
Th' invisible, everlasting? or dispers'd
Among its immaterial kindred free,
The elements? Oh man! man! fit compeer
Of worms and angels, trodden under foot,
Yet boundless by the infinite expanse
Of ether! mouldering and immutable!

But thou, Avenger, in that quiet glebe,
How many things are hid, once link'd to thee
By ties more gentle than the coupling silk
That pairs two snowy doves! hands used to meet
In brotherly embrace with thine, and hearts
Wherein thy image dwelt, clear, changeless, full
As the spring moon upon a crystal lake:
Faces in feast, in council, and in fight,
That took their colouring from thine. And thou
Alone art breathing, moving, speaking here,
Amid the cold, the motionless, the mute!
Among that solemn multitude of graves
One woman hath her dwelling: round and round
She wanders with a foot that seems to fear
That it is treading over one belov'd.
She seems to seek what she despairs to find.
And ever and anon she stops to hear,
Then, as in bitter disappointment, shakes
Her loose hair, and again goes wandering on.
She shriek'd at Samor's presence, and flung up
Her arms, and in her shriek was laughter. "Thou!
What dost thou with that face above the earth,
Thou should'st be with the rest!"—"My friend's soft bride,
The dainty Evelene!"—"That's it, the name
Wherewith the winds have mock'd me every morn,
And every dusky eve—or was it then?
Aye then it was, when I was wont to sleep

On a soft bed, and when no rough winds blew
About me, when I ever saw myself
Drest glitt'ringly, and there was something else
Then, which there is not now."—"Thy Elidure!
Sad houseless widow!"—"Ha! thou cunning man,
'Twas that, 'twas that! and thou canst tell me too
Where they have laid him—well thou canst, I know
There's deep connexion 'twixt my grief and thee.
Thou, thou art he that wakest sleepers up,
And send'st them forth along the cold bare heath,
To seek the dark and disappearing. There
Sound howlings at the midnight bleak, and blasts
Shivering and fierce. And there come peasant boors
That bring the mourner bread, and weave the roof
Above her, of the brown and rustling fern!
But never sounds the voice, or comes the shape
She sought for. Oh, my wakings and my sleeps
How exquisite they were, upon his breast
I slept, and when I woke there smil'd his face."
Even as the female pigeon to her nest,
All ruffled by rude winds and discompos'd,
Returning, with full breast sits brooding down,
And all sinks smooth around her and beneath:
So when the image of departed joy
Revisited the heart of that sad wife,
Its wayward frenzy settled into peace.
Sweetly she spake, and unconfusedly heard,
Of him the low, the undistinguish'd laid,

Of Samor's friend, her bridegroom, Elidure.
And something of its soft and tender bloom
Faintly enlivened her pale hollow cheek.
But when again alone, o'er heart and brain
Flash'd back the wandering, recommenc'd the search
Ever with broken questionings, and mute
Lip-parted listenings, pauses at each grave,
As though she almost hoped, where lay her lord,
That some inherent consciousness should stir
Within her; though 'tis nature's law, that one
Cold undistinguish'd silence palls the dead,
Yet seem'd it hard and cruel not to grant
One low sound, even the likeness of a sound,
To tell her where to lay her down and die.
Sure there are spirits round her, yet all leagued
T' abuse and lead astray, and his, even his,
Pitiless as the rest, with jealous care
Concealing its felt presence. Ghostly night
Wafts her no dusk intelligence; the day
Shews nothing with its broad and glaring rays.

BOOK X.

ARGUMENT.

Shore of Cornwall. Uther Pendragon at the siege of Tintagel. Samor. Rescue of Igerna. Arthur. Fleet of Hoel, King of Armorica (Bretagne). Craft of Gorlois. The firing of the Beacons from one end of the Western part of the Island to the other, from Cornwall to Cumberland.

BUT thou from North to South hast rang'd the isle,
From Skiddaw to the Cornwall sea-beat rocks,
One icy face of desolation cold,
One level sheet of sorrow and dismay,
Avenger! thou hast travers'd, hast but held
Companionship with mourners and with slaves.
Upon the northern rocks of Cornwall meet
Th' Avenger and the Warrior; thus spake he—
"How name ye yon strong castle on the rock?"—
"Tintagel, the prince Gorlois' towers."—"And whose
Yon soldiers cresting with their camp the shore,
And yon embattled navy on the sea,
Rounding their moony circle?"—"Mine."—"And thou?"
"Methinks, most solemn questioner, the helm

Might well proclaim Pendragon."—"No, the front,
Whereon that scaly blazon us'd to glow,
Had ne'er been girding with unnatural siege
A British castle, while all Britain lay
In chains beneath the Stranger."—"What art thou,
That beardest in thy high and taunting vein
The Princes of the land?"—"A Prince."—"Thus arm'd
And thus attir'd!"—"Misjudging! must thou learn
His actions are the raiment of the man:
Better to serve my country in worn weeds
And dinted arms like mine, than 'gainst her sons
To lace a golden panoply. This rust,
'Tis Saxon blood, for thine, its only praise
Is its bright stainlessness. Look not, fierce Prince,
As from my veins its earliest spots should fall,
'Tis Britain barbs the arrows that I speak,
And makes thy heart its mark."—"What man or more
Thus fires and freezes, angers and controls
With the majestic valour of his tongue,
The never yet controll'd, and bears the name
Of Britain, like a shield before him, broad
And firm against my ripe and bursting wrath?
Samor! come, honour'd warrior, to my arms;
Oh shame to see, and seeing not to know
The noblest of our isle."—"No arms may fold
Samor within them, but a Briton's; thou
By this apostate war disown'st the name,
And leaguest dark alliance with her foes."

"Ah, then thou know'st not, in yon rock is mew'd
The crafty kite that hath my dove in thrall,
My dove, my bride, my sweet Igerna; * her
That Gorlois with his privy talon swoop'd,
The gentle, the defenceless; and looks down
From his air-swinging eyrie on my wrath,
That like the sea against that rooted rock
Lashes and roars in vain."—"Thy bride!"—"My bride,
By holy vows in saintly chapel pledged;
And all before, the twilight meetings stolen
Upon the shelly beach, when came my bark
Sliding with smooth oar through the soundless spray
From the Armoric shore; and words so fond
The unfelt waters crept up round our feet:
All after, rapturous union undisturb'd,
Her father's blessing on our bridal couch,
Promise of infant pledges, all destroy'd,
All wither'd by that Gorlois, that low worm
I had disdain'd to tread on heretofore.
He with some cold and antiquated plea
Of broken compact by her sire, away

* This seizure of the fair Igerna, the wife of Uther Pendragon, by Gorlois, is related in the romantic histories, or the historical romances, of the period; but I must acknowledge that the general tradition is not quite so much in favour of Uther's original right to the hand of Igerna. She is more often represented as the wife of Gorlois, from whom her heart and at length her person were won by the superior person and valour of Pendragon.

Reft with a villain stealth th' ill-guarded gem,
And hoards it in his lone and trackless cave."
" A darker crime, more lawless robbery,
Hath made this land of free-born Christian men
The plunder of fierce Heathens. Uther, hear!
Hear, son of Constantine! most dear the ties
Of wedlock, earthly woven, yet seal'd by God.
But those, that link us to our native land,
Are wrought out from the eternal adamant
By the Almighty. Oh, thy country's call,
Loud with a thousand voices, drowns the tone
Of sweet complaining, even from wife belov'd—
Forego the weaker, Uther, and obey
The stronger duty."—" Bloodless man and cold!
Or wrong I thee? perchance the Saxon holds
Thy Emeric, and my claims must cede to thine,
Even as all beauties to that peerless star."
" Spare, Uther, spare thy taunting, she is safe,
Briton or Saxon harm not her."—" 'Tis well,
Fair tidings!—but thy shuddering brow looks white."—
" There 's a cold safety, Uther, with the dead!
There is where foes disturb no more, the grave!"—
" Pardon me, friend—oh pardon—but my wife,
She too will seek that undisturbed place,
Ere yield to that pale craven's love; if false
She dare not live, and yet, oh yet she lives."
Uprose the Avenger, and his way he took
To where the rock broke off abrupt and sheer.

Before him yawn'd the chasm, whose depth of gloom
Sever'd the island Castle from the shore.
The ocean waves, as though but newly rent
That narrow channel, tumbled to and fro,
Rush'd and recoil'd, and sullenly sent up
An everlasting roar, deep echoed out
From th' underworking caverns; the white gulls
Were wandering in the dusk abyss; and shone
Faint sunlight here and there on the moist slate.
The Castle drawbridge hung aloof; arm'd men
Pac'd the stern ramparts; javelins look'd out
From embrasure and loop-hole; arbalist
And bowstring loaded lay with weight of shaft
Menacing. On the dizzy brink stood up
Th' Avenger, like a Seraph when absolv'd
His earthly mission, on some sunny peak
He waits the gathering cloud, whereon he wont
To charioteer along the azure space;
In vain he waits not, under his plum'd feet,
And round about his spreading wings it floats,
And sails off proudly with its heavenly freight.
Even thus at Samor's call down heavy fell
The drawbridge, o'er the abyss th' Avenger springs:
Tintagel's huge portcullis, groaning up
Its grooves, gives way; then up the jealous bridge
Behind him springs, the gate falls clashing down.
Half wonder, and half fear, Pendragon shook
The terrors of his crest, and gasping stood,

As when a hunter is gone in to brave
The bear within his shaggy den, down peers
His fellow through the dusk, and fears to see
What his keen eyes strain after. But elate
Appear'd upon the rampart that tall Chief,
Seeming on th' outpour'd garrison to cast
Words potent as the fabled Wizard's oils,
With the terrific smoothness of their fire
Wide sheeting the hush'd ocean; th' arbalist
Discharg'd its unaim'd bolt; the arrow fell
From the slack bowstring: careless of his charge,
The watchman from his turret lean'd; o'er all
Bright'ning and stilling the high language spread,
Giving a cast of pride to vulgar brows,
Shedding o'er stupor and thick-breathing awe
A solemn hue of glory. Far it spread
Beyond the sphere of sound, th' indignant brow,
The stately waving of the arm discours'd,
Flow'd argument from every comely limb,
And the whole man was eloquence. From cliff,
From bark gaz'd Uther's soldiery, one voice
Held in suspense the wild and busy war,
And on the motion of his lips, the fate
Of two strong armies hung. Anon the gate
Flew up, the bridge lay shuddering o'er the chasm.
Forth Samor comes, a Lady by his side,
And Gorlois in the garb of peace behind.
Tremblingly she came gliding on, and light,

As the west wind o'er beds of flowers; a child
Was with her: the cool freshness of the air
Seem'd o'er her marble cheek a flush unus'd
To breathe, and human faces o'er her threw
A modest, faint disturbance. Uther rush'd
To meet her, ere he came her failing frame
Seem'd as it sought some breast to sink upon,
Though feebly resolute, that none but his
Should be the chosen resting place. But he
Severe withheld her. "Can the snowdrop bloom
Untainted on the hemlock bank; near thee,
Igerna, long hath trail'd a venomous plant,
Hast thou the sullying influence scap'd?" She strove
To work displeasure to her brow, the joy,
The fondness would not give it place: she held
Her boy on high; she pointed from the lines
Of his soft face to Uther's, with appeal
Half rapture, half reproach; and cast herself
With timid boldness on her rightful couch,
Her husband's bosom, that receiv'd her in,
Even as the opening clouds an angel home
Returning. But the joyous boy relax'd
His features to a beautiful delight;
To the fierce Dragon on his father's helm
Lifting his sportive hand, and smoothing down
The horrent scales, and looking with glad eye
Into the fiery hollow of his jaws.

Mute lay the armies, the pale Gorlois wrought

His features to a politic joy. Alone
Stood Samor and aloof, he stood in tears.
Samor, amid the plain of buried men
Tearless, and in his own deserted home,
In tears unveil'd before th' assembled camp.
It was so like a meeting after death,
That union of the husband and the wife,
So ghostly, so unearthly. Thus shall meet
The disembodied, Emeric and himself,
Not with rude rocks their footing, the cold airs
And cloudy sunshine of this world around;
But all of life must intervene, and all
The long dark grave mysterious: yet even here
It was a sweet impossibility,
Wherewith at times his soul fond dalliance held,
An earthly, bodily, sensible caress,
Even long and rapturous, as that hanging now
On Uther's neck from soft Igerna's arms.

Upon the silence burst a voice that cried
"Arthur," whereat the child his sport broke off
With that embossed serpent, and stretch'd out
His arms, where, on the fragment of a rock,
Stood Merlin. "Arthur, hail! hail, fatal Boy,
Bright arrow from the bow of Destiny,
Go forth upon thy fiery course! the steeds
Are in the meadows, that shall bear thee forth,
Thee and thy barded chivalry! the spears
Are forg'd, wherewith in tourney and in fight

Ye shall o'erbear the vaunting Saxon ! shields
Are stamping with your bright devices bold !
And Bards are leaning on their high-strung harps,
Awaiting thee, to flower out in their boon
And ripe fertility of song. Go forth,
Strong reaper in the harvest of renown,
Arthur ! the everlasting Lord of Fate
Hath summon'd thee to thy immortal race !"
The infant clapp'd his hands, Pendragon flung
Aloft his scaly bickering crest, her child
Igerna folded to her heart, and wept.
And forward leap'd the Avenger to salute
Snowdon's dark Prophet ! Merlin was not there.——
Good fortune on good fortune follows fast ;
Tidings come rapid of a Breton fleet
Seen on the southern shore ; the chiefs are pass'd
To where th' Archangel's Mount o'erlooks the sea.
Oh go not to thy couch, thou bright-hair'd Sun !
Though Ocean spread its welcoming breast, yet pause
'Mid that ethereal architecture, wrought
Around thee by thine own creative light.
How broad the over-vaulting palace arch
Spreads up the heavens, with amethyst ceil'd, and hung
With an enwoven tapestry of flame,
Wav'd over by long banner, and emblaz'd,
Like hall of old barbaric Potentate,
With scutcheon and with shield, that now unfold,
Now in their cloudy texture shift ; and paved

With watery mosaic rich, the waves
Quick glancing, like a floating surface, laid
With porphyry and crystal interwrought.
There's yet a sight, oh Sun! to check awhile
Thy setting; lo, the failing breezes lift
The white wings of that fair Armoric fleet
To catch the level lines of light; the oars
Flash up the spray, that purples as it falls:
While wearing one by one, their armed freight
They cast out on the surfy beach. The Kings,
King Emrys, and Armoric Hoel, meet
Pendragon, Samor, and their band of chiefs.

There meet they on the land's extremest verge
To conquer, to deliver, few, but strong,
Strong in the hardihood of souls. As rose
The giant wrestler from his mother's breast,
Earth-born Anteus, his huge limbs refresh'd
For the Herculean combat; so shall ye,
Kings, Chiefs, and Warriors, from your native soil
Draw to the immortal faculties of mind
A springtide everlasting and unchang'd.
The armour of a holy cause outshines
The iron or the knosped brass, and hopes
And memories, to the home-returning brave
Crowding from every speck of sacred earth,
Outplead the trumpet's wakening blast, till leaps
Vengeance to Glory's vanguard post, and leads
The onset, and looks proudly down to see
The red blood deepening round her laving feet.

Alas, that in your harvest of high thoughts,
Thick set with golden promise of renown,
The poppy seeds of envy and distrust
Should take their baleful root. Slow winds along
Gorlois, the sower of that noxious crop,
Scattering it in with careless toil; now stands
By royal Emrys' side, now mines beneath
Pendragon's towery soul, now sadly warns,
With cautious words and dark speech broken off,
Hoel, the crown'd Armorican; his looks
Belying his feign'd confidence of speech,
But half surmising fear, and killing hope
By his cold care of keeping it alive.
"Not that I love not, whom all love; admire
On whom the admiration of all hearts
Falls with such free profusion; 'tis no shame
For us mean lamps before great Samor's light
To wane and glimmer in our faint eclipse.
Yet whence this fettering of all eyes and hearts?
This stern unsocial solitude of fame?
True, from that fatal banquet 'scap'd he, true,
Undaunted hath he rov'd the isle, nor doubt
For some high purpose, that 'twere rash for us
To search with our obscure and misty sight.
Nor think, King Emrys, I thy crown assert
Unstably set upon thy royal brow;
But there's a dazzling in its jewel'd round
Might tempt a less self-mastering grasp. Who holds

The souls of men in thraldom with his tongue,
Makes bridges grow before him, stony walls
Break up to give him way,—I speak not now
In vengeance of Tintagel, 'twas a deed
Most worth my richest praise, that made me friend
To brave Pendragon. But ambition wreck'd
The angels, and the aspiring soul of man
Hath sinn'd for meaner gain than Britain's throne."
So one by one he wound his serpent coil
Around the Chieftains' souls; and inly breath'd
The creeping venom. But Pendragon's heart,
Too fiery or too noble to suspect,
In Samor's teeth flung fierce th' oppressive doubt.
Th' Avenger's tranquil smile was like the change
Of aspect in a green and lofty tree,
Touch'd by the wings of some faint breeze; nor shakes
The massy foliage, nor is quite at rest,
While languidly the undisturbing air
Falls away and expires. "Will Emrys hold
At midnight on St. Michael's Mount his pomp
Of Coronation? Samor will be there."—
"At midnight!"—"Aye, the fires will gaily blaze,
The silent air is meet for solemn oaths."
The night is starless, soft and still, the heavens
O'erwoven with a thin and rayless mist.
A long low heavy sound of breaking surge
Roams down the shore, and now and then the woods
Flutter and bend with one short rush of wind.

The tide hath risen o'er the stony belt,
That to the mainland links the Mount: where meet
Even now the Chieftains, ocean all around,
On every side the white and moaning waves.
On the bare summit, 'neath the cope of heaven,
The conclave stands, bare, save a lofty pile
Of wood, compacted like funereal pyre
Of a departed hero, in old time
On some Ægean promontory rear'd,
Or by the Black Inhospitable Sea.*
The crown is on king Emrys' head, his hair
Is redolent with the anointing oil.
"Hail, King of Britain!"—Samor cried, and "Hail!"
Replied that band of heroes; Hail! the shores
Echoed, from bark and tent came pealing up
The universal Hail, the ocean waves
Broke in with their hoarse murmur of applause.
"Air, earth, and waters, ye have play'd your part,
There's yet another element,"—cried aloud
Samor, and in the pyre he cast a brand.
A moment, and uprush'd the giant fire,
Piercing the dim heavens with its blazing brow,
And on the still air shaking its red locks.
There by its side the Vassals and their King,
Motionless with their shadows huge and dun,
Show'd like destroying Angels, round enwrapp'd
In their careering pomp of flame; far flash'd

* The Axenos, afterwards called the Euxeinos Sea.

The yellow midnight day o'er shore and sea:
The waves now ruddy heav'd, now darkly plung'd;
Upon the rocks, within the wavering light
Strong-featur'd faces fierce, and hard-lin'd forms
Broke out and disappear'd; the anchor'd fleet
Were laving their brown sides in rainbow spray.
No sound was heard, but the devouring flame,
And the thick plashing waters. "Keep your faith,
(Cried Samor) ye eternal hills, and ye
Heaven-neighbouring mountains!" Eastward far anon
Another fire rose furious up; behind
Another and another: all the hills
Each beyond each held up its crest of flame.
Along the heavens the bright and crimson hue
Widening and deepening travels on: the range
O'erleaps black Tamar, by whose ebon tide
Cornwall is bounded; and on Heytor rock,
Above the stony moorish source of Dart,
It waves a sanguine standard; Haldon burns,
And the red City * glows a deeper hue.
And all the southern rocks, the moorland downs
In those portentous characters of flame
Discourse, and bear the glaring legend on:
Even to the graves on Ambri plain, where woke
That pallid woman, and rejoic'd, and deem'd
'Twas sent to guide her to the tomb she sought.
Fast flash they up, those altars of revenge,

* Caer ruth, Exeter.

As though the snake-hair'd Sister torch-bearers,
Th' Eumenides, from the Tartarean depths
Were leaping on from hill to hill, on each
Leaving the tracks of their flame-dropping feet.
Or as the souls of the dead fathers, wrapt
In bright meteorous grave-clothes, had arisen,
And each sate crowning his accustom'd hill,
Radiant and mute: or the devoted isle
Had wrought down by her bold and frequent guilt
Th' Almighty's lightning shafts, now numberless
Forth raining from the lurid reeking clouds,
And smiting all the heights. On spreads the train,
Northward it breaks upon the Quantock ridge;
It reddens on the Mendip forests dark;
It looks into the cavern'd Cheddar cliffs:
The boatman on the Severn mouth awakes
And sees the waters rippling round his keel
In spots and streaks of purple light, each shore
Ablaze with all its answering hills: the streams
Run glittering down Plinlimmon's side, though thick
And moonless the wan night: and Idris stands
Like Stromboli or Ætna, where 'twas feign'd
E'er at their flashing furnace wrought the Sons
Of Vulcan, forging with eternal toil
Jove's never idle thunderbolts. And thou,
Snowdon, the king of mountains, art not dark
Amid thy vassal brethren gleaming bright.
Is it to welcome thy returning Seer,

That thus above thy clouds, above thy snows,
Thou wear'st that wreathed diadem of fire,
As to outshine the pale and winking stars?
O'er Menai's waters blue the gleaming spreads,
The Bard in Mona's secret grove beholds
A glitter on his harp-strings, and looks out
Upon the kindling cliffs of Penmanmawr.
Is it a pile of martyrdom above
Clwyd's green vale? beside the embers bright
Stands holy Germain, as a Saint new come
From the pure mansions of beatitude,
The centre of a glory, that spreads round
Its film of thin pellucid gold. Nor there
Pauses the restless Messenger, still on
Vaults it from rock to rock, from peak to peak.
Far seen it shimmer'd on Caer Ebranc wall,
And Malwyn blew a bugle blast for joy.
The sun uprising sees the dusk night fled
Already from tall Pendle, and the height
Of Ingleborough; sees Helvellyn cast
A meteor splendour on the mountain lakes,
Like mirrors of the liquid molten brass.
The brightest and the broadest and the last,
There flakes the beacon glare; and in the midst
Dashing the ruddy sparkles to and fro
With the black remnant of a pine-tree stem,
Stands, arm'd from head to foot, Prince Vortimer.

BOOK XI.

ARGUMENT.

General Insurrection of the Britons. The Spring. Hallelujah victory in Maes Garmon (North Wales). King Vortigern. His Departure from Caer Merddhyn. The Scene of Battle, near Coningsborough in Yorkshire. The Army and the Gods of the Saxons. Hengist. Horsa. Argantyr. Caswallon. The Breton Army. Emrys. Uther. Samor. Vortimer. Malwyn. The Prophetess. The Child Arthur. Commencement of the Battle. Malwyn. Caswallon. The Sable Warrior (Vortigern). Vortimer and Horsa. Samor and Caswallon. Defeat of the Saxons. The Women in the Camp. Samor and Argantyr. Capture of Hengist.

MIGHTY in thy endurance, in revenge
Mightier! thou shak'st thy slavish patience off,
Oh Britain! as a snake its wither'd skin,
That boastful in the sun uncoils and spreads
In bright and cruel beauty. Not in vain
Have those wild beacons rear'd their fires, thou wak'st,
The slumber falls from thee, as dewdrops shed
From the morn-kindling falcon's wing. On hill,
In vale, in forest and in moor, in field
And city, like the free and common air,

Like the wide-spreading golden hue of dawn,
Ranges the boundless passion uncontroll'd.
The "Vigilance" hath dropp'd, absolv'd, away
From the fierce war-cry, one portending word,
"Vengeance," rides lonely upon all the winds.
Alas, delicious Spring! God sends thee down
To breathe upon his cold and perish'd works
Beauteous revival; earth should welcome thee,
Thee and the West wind, thy smooth paramour,
With the soft smiling of her flowery meads,
Her joys, her melodies. The bounding stag
Flutters the shivering fern; the steed shakes out
His mane, the dewy herbage silver-webb'd
With proud step trampling; the wild goat looks down
From his empurpling bed of heath, where break
The waters deep and blue with crystal gleams
Of their quick leaping people: the fresh lark
Is in the morning sky; the nightingale
Tunes evesong to the drooping waterfall.
Creation lives all loveliness, and melts
To one mild harmony of conscious joy.
Man only, savage and discordant Man,
Strews for thy tender feet the battle field,
Makes all thy gentle-breathing airs to jar
With his hoarse trumpetings, scares thy sweet light
With gleams of violent and angry brass.
Away! it is a yearly common joy,
A rapture that ne'er fails the solemn Sun

In his eternal round, the blossoming
And fragrance of the green dissolving earth.
But a fresh springtide in the human soul,
A nation from its wintry trance set loose,
The bursting ice of servitude, the bloom
Of freedom in the withered mind obscure,
These are earth's brightest glories, these transcend
All nature's fairest and most splendid shows.
Therefore the young Sun with rejoicing light
Shall beam on ensigns; the blithe airs shall waft
Jocund the lofty pealing battle words;
And, not unwelcome, fierce crests intercept
The spring-dews from the thirsty soil; and earth
For vestment shall put on war's brazen garb,
More proudly than her brightest robe of green.
Throughout the isle was base subjection tame:
Throughout the isle, hath Freedom rear'd her, plum'd
With terror, sandal'd with relentlessness:
Her march like brazen chariots, or the tramp
Of horsemen in a rocky glen; and clouds
Of javelins in her front, and in her rear
Dead men in grizzly heaps, dead Saxons strewn
Upon their trampled White Horse banners. Them
Her fury hath no time to scorn, no pause
To look back on her deathful deeds achiev'd,
While aught remains before her to achieve.
Distract amid the wide spread feast of blood

The wandering raven knows not where to feed,
And the gorg'd vulture droops her wing and sleeps.
War hath the garb of holiness! bear proof,*
Thou vale of Clwyd, to our cold late days,
By the embalming of tradition named,
Maes Garmon, of her saintly Bishop. He
His grey thin locks unshaken, calm his port
As if he trod a chapel's rush-strewn floor,
Comes foremost of his Christian mountaineers
Against th' embattled Pagans' fierce array.
By the green margin of the stream, the band
Of Arngrim glitter in the morning light.

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* But their approch being known, (that of the Saxons and Picts) Bishop Germaine took upon him the leading of the British host, and over against the passage, thorough the which the enemies were appointed, he chose forth a fair vallie, enclosed with high mounteins; and within the same he placed his new washed ("baptised") armie. And when he saw the enemies now at hand, he commanded that everie man, with one generall voice, should answer him, cricing aloud the same crie that he should begin. So that even as the enemies were readie to give the charge upon the Britains, supposing that they should have taken them at unawares, and before anie warning had been given, suddenly the Bishop Germaine with the priests, with a loud and shrill voice, called Alleluia, thrice; and therewith all the multitudes of the Britains, with one voice, cried the same crie, with such a lowd shout, that the Saxons were therewith so amazed and astonied (the echo from the rocks and hills adjoining redoubling in such wise the crie) that they thought not onelie the rocks and cliffs had fallen upon them, but that even the skie itself had broken in pieces, and come tumbling doune upon their heads. Herewith, therefore, throwing awaie their weapons, they tooke them to their feet, and glad was he that might get to be foremost in running awaie. Many of them for haste were drowned in a river which they had to passe.—Holinshed B. v. c. 6.

Their shadowy lances line the marble stream
With long and level rules of trembling shade;
The sunshine falling in between, in streaks
Of brightness. They th' unwonted shew of war
Behold, slow winding down the wooded hill.
"Now, by our Gods," cried Arngrim, "not content
To scare our midnight with their insolent fires,
They break upon our calm and peaceful day."
But silent as the travel of the clouds
At breathless twilight, or a flock that winds,
Dappling the brown cliff with its snowy specks,
Foldward along the evening dews, a bell
Now and then tinkling, faintly shrill, come on
Outspreading on the meadow the stern band
Of Britons with their mitred Captain; front
Oppos'd to front they stand, and spear to spear.
Then Germain clasp'd his hands and look'd to heaven;
Then Germain in a deep and solemn tone
Cried "Alleluia!" answer was flung back:
From cliff and cavern "Alleluia" burst;
It seem'd strong voices broke the bosom'd earth,
Dropt voices from the clouds, and in the rush
Of waters was a human clamour; far
The scattering and discomfiting appeal
Swept o'er all nature in its boundless range.
Ceaseless and countless, lifeless, living things
Multiplied "Alleluia;" all the air

Was that one word, all sounds became that sound,
As the broad lightning swallows up all lights,
All quench'd in one blue universal glare.
On rush'd the Britons, but 'gainst flying foes!
Quick smote the Britons, but no breast-plate clove
Before them! then the ignominious death
First through the back found way to Saxon hearts.
Oh, Suevian forests! Clwyd's vale beholds
What ye have never witnessed, Arngrim's flight—
Fleet huntsman, thou art now the deer! the herd,
Whereof thou wert the prime and loftiest horn'd,
Are falling fast around thee, th' unleash'd dogs
Of havock on their reeking flanks: and thee,
The herdsman of the meek and peaceful goats,
Thee, the soft tuner of the reedy flute
Beside Nantfrangon's stony cataract,
Mordrin pursues. So strong that battle word,
Its holy transmutation and austere
Works in the soul of man; the spirit sheathes
In the thrice folding brass of valour; swells
The stagnant blood into a current fierce
And torrent like, and in the breast, erewhile
But open to the tremulous melting airs
Of passions gentle and affections bland,
Plants armed hope, and eagle-wing'd desires.
Therefore that youth his downy hand hath wreath'd
In the strong Suevian's knotted locks, drawn up

Like a wrought helm of ebon; therefore fix
His eyes, more us'd to swim in languid light,
With an implacable and constant stare
Down on the face of Arngfim, backward drawn,
As he its writhing agony enjoy'd:
And therefore he, whose wont it was to bear
The many sparkling crystal, or the cup
Of dripping water-lily from the spring
To the blithe maiden of his love, now shakes
A gory and dissever'd head aloft,
And bounds in wild ovation down the vale.
But in that dire and beacon haunted night
King Vortigern his wonted seat had ta'en
Upon Caermerddhyn's topmost palace tower.
There, the best privilege of greatness fall'n,
He saw not, nor was seen: there, wrapt in gloom,
'Twas his soul's treasur'd luxury and sole joy
From nature many a mournful parallel
To draw, fantastic, of his abject state.
Sad desperate consolation!—All around
Lay cloudy, dim, and indistinct; the last
Faint glimmering like to light, was what remain'd
Of day, just not so utterly extinct
And quench'd, as yet to shew splendour had been,
And was not; the dusk semblance of himself
Delighted, royal once, now with a mock
And mimic of his lustre haunted. Why,
Why should not human glory wane, since clouds

Put out the immortal planets in the sky?
Why should not crowns have seasons, since the moon
Hath but her hour to queen it in the heavens?
Why should not high and climbing souls be lost
In the benighting shroud of the world's gloom?
Lo, one inglorious, undistinguish'd night
Gathers the ancient mountains in its train,
While still the densest and most turbulent clouds
Thicken upon the stateliest; but beneath
The lowly and contented waters lie
Asleep upon their weedy banks, yet they
Have all the faint blue brightness that remains.
Then moodier the capricious humour grown,
Stoop'd upon mean and trivial things, them too
Wrought to his wayward misanthropic scope.
Amid the swaying and disturbed air
The rooks hung murmuring on the oak-tree tops,
As plaining their uneasy loftiness.
While, solitary as himself, the owl
Sate calling on its deaf and wandering mate.
Him at that sound seiz'd merriment, that made
The lip drop, the brow writhe, "Howl on," he cried,
"Howl for thy dusky paramour,"—and turn'd
To where Rowena's chamber casements stood,
Void, silent, dark of their once-brilliant lights.
Sudden around blaz'd up the mountain tops
Each with its intertwisted sheaf of flame,
South, North, and East and West, fire everywhere,

Everywhere flashing and tumultuous light.
Then gaz'd the unking'd, then cried out the fallen,
" Now, by my soul, when comets gaze on kings
Even from the far and vaulting heavens, 'tis faith
There 's hollowness beneath their tottering thrones;
But when they flash upon our earth, and glare
Close in our faces, 'tis ripe time and full
For palaces to quake, and royal tombs
To ope their wide and all-receiving jaws.
What is 't to me? ye menace at the Great!
Ye stoop not to be dangerous and dread,
Oh haughty and mysterious lights! to thrones
Low and despis'd like mine; in earlier days
Vortigern would have quail'd, he mocks you now.
Ye are not of the heavens, I know, I see,
Discomfiters of darkness, Conquerors
Of midnight, ye are of the earth. Why stands
Caermerddhyn and the realm of Dyfed black
Amid this restless multitude of flame?
'Tis not for idle or for fruitless show
That with such splendid violation Man
Infringeth on stern nature's laws, and rends
From night her consecrate and ancient pall;
Samor, thy hand is there! and Vortigern
Hath not yet learnt the patience cold and tame
To be outblaz'd and stifled thus." Down pass'd
The Monarch from his seat; brief time elaps'd,
And lo, within that Palace all look'd red,

And hurried with a deep confusing glare:
And over it a vaulting dome of smoke
Surging arose and vast, till roaring out
Columns of mounting fire sprung up, and all,
Whelm'd in one broad envelopement of flame,
Stood. As when in heroic Pagan song
Apollo to his Clarian temple came;
At once the present Godhead kindled all,
Th' elaborate architecture, glory-wreath'd
The pillars rose, the sculptur'd architrave
Swam in the liquid gold, the Worshipper
Within the vestibule of marble pure
Held up his hand before his blinded eyes,
And so ador'd: but the unconsuming fire
Innoxious rang'd th' unparching edifice.
But ne'er was Palace or was Monarch seen
More in that city, one a shapeless heap
Lay in its ashes white; how went the King
And whither, no one knew, but He who knows
All things. 'Twas frequent in the vulgar tale,
(None saw it, yet all knew them well that saw,*)
At midnight manifest a huge arm came
Forth from the welkin; once it wav'd and twice,
And then it was not: but a bolt thrice fork'd,
Each fork a spike of flame, burst on the roof,
And all became a fire, and all fell down

* Henry Huntingdon, Hist.

And smoulder'd, even as now the shapeless walls
Lie in scorch'd heaps and black. At that same hour
A dark steed, and a darker rider pass'd,
With speed bemocking mortal steed, or man,
Down the steep hill precipitous. 'Twas like
In shape and hue black Favorin, on whose back
King Vortigern was wont to ride abroad;
Like, surely not the same, for fire came out
From under his quick hoofs, and in his breath;
And sulphurous the blasted foot-tracks smelt,
Some dinted deep in the hard rock, some seared
On meadow grass, where never since have dews
Lain glittering, never the fresh verdure sprung.
Now is the whole Isle war. But I must crave
Pardon from those in meaner conflict slain,
Or conquerors; Poesy's fair treasure-house
Contains not all the splendid names that gem
The course of humankind; in heaven alone
Th' imperishable brass preserves enroll'd
In letters deep of amaranthine light
All martyrs to their country, and their God.
Oh that my spirit, holding the broad glass
Of its invention, might at once condense
All rays of glory from the kindling Isle
Full emanating. As of old 'tis famed
The philosophic Syracusan caught
The wide diverging sunbeams, by the force
Of mind creating to himself a right

And property in nature's common gifts,
And domineering the free elements.
He that heaven-seiz'd artillery pour'd forth
To sear the high beaks of the 'sieging fleet,
That burnt, unknowing whence, 'mid the wet waves.
So I the fine immortal light would pour
Abroad, in the long after-time to beam
A consecrate and vestal fire, and guide
Secure o'er danger's precipices wild,
And the smooth slopes of luxury and false bliss,
All lovers of their country. They my song
Embosoming within their heart of heart,
Like mine own Samor, should bear on, too strong
To perish, and too haughty to despair.
They happier, he uprearing on the sand
A Pharos, steady for a while to stem
The fierce assaulting waves, in after times
To fall; they building for eternity
Britain's rock-founded temple of renown.

In the Isle's centre is a champain broad,
Now broken into cornfield and smooth mead,
Near which a hill, now with the ruin'd towers
Of Coningsborough (from that fight of Kings
Nam'd in old Saxon phrase,) soars crested; Dune
Skirts with her azure belt the level plain.

Morn dawn'd with all her attributes, the slow
Impearling of the heavens, the sparkling white
On the webb'd grass, the fragrant mistiness,

The fresh airs with the twinkling leaves at sport,
And all the gradual and emerging light,
The crystalline distinctness settling clear,
And all the wakening and the strengthening sound.
There dawn'd she on a battle-field * superb.
The beauty that is war's embellishment,
The splendour, under whose quick-glancing pall
Man proudly moves to slay and to be slain,
How wonderful! In semicircle huge,
Round that hill foot, the Saxon camps his strength;
A many-colour'd dazzling cirque, more rich
Than the autumnal woods, when the quick winds
Shake on them broken sunlight, than the skies
When thunder-clouds are bursting into light,

* The chronicles give a succession of battles, which I have condensed into one.—"Thus an armie being assembled, Aurelius Ambrosius went against them, and valiantlie assailed them; so that within the space of a few daies they fought three battels with great fiercenesse on both sides, in triall of their high displeasures and uttermost forces, in which at length the Britains put the Saxons to flight, Horsus, the brother of Hengist, being slaine, with a great number of his people. But yet notwithstanding the enemie's rage was little abated hereby, for within a few daies after receiving out of Germanie a new supplie of men, they brake forth upon the Britains with great confidence of victorie. Aurelius Ambrosius was no sooner advertised thereof, but that without delaie he set forward towards Yorke, from whence the enemies should come, and hearing by the way that Hengist was encamped about seven-and-twentie miles distant from that citie, neare to the bank of the river at this day called Dune, in the place where Doncaster now standeth, he returned out of his waie, and marched towards that place, and the next day set on the enemies and vanquished them." The chronicle adds, that Hengist was slain in the battle, differing from the tradition preserved by Harrison, and hereafter quoted.

And rainbow-skirted hangs each fold, or fring'd
With liquid gold: so wav'd that crescent broad
With moving fire, bloom'd all the field with brass:
Making even fear voluptuous, and the sense
Of danger in deep admiration lost—
Oh beauteous if that morning had no eve!

The Eastern wing, his tall steeds to his car
Harness'd, whose scythes shone newly burnish'd, led
Caswallon; he his painted soldiery,
Their naked breasts blue-gleaming with uncouth
And savage portraitures of hideous things,
Human and monstrous terribly combin'd,
Array'd; himself no armour of defence
Cumber'd, as he were one Death dare not slay,
A being from man's vulgar lot exempt,
Commission'd to destroy, yet dangerless
Amid destruction, against whom war shower'd
All its stor'd terrors, but still baffled, back
Recoil'd from his unwounded front serene.

The centre were the blue-eyed Germans, loose
Their fierce hair, various each strong nation's arms;
A wild and terrible diversity
In the fell skill of slaughter, in the art
Of doing sacrifice to death. Some helm'd,
Whose visors like distended jaws appear'd
Of sylvan monster; some in brinded furs
Wrapt shaggy, on whose shoulders seem'd to cling
Yet living the fix'd claws; with cross bows some,

Some with long lances, some with falchions curv'd.
The Arian, wont to make the sable night
A pander to his terrors,* in swarth arms
He bursting from the forest, when the shades
Were deepest, like embodied gloom advanc'd,
Shap'd for some dreadful purpose, now he mov'd
Unnatural 'mid the clear and golden day.
Here Hengist, Horsa there amid the troop
Wound their war-horses; he his weapon fell
Shook, a round ball of iron spikes chain'd loose
To a huge pike-stave, like a baleful star,
Aye gleaming devastation in its sweep.
Hengist begirt with that fam'd falchion call'd
The "Widower of Women;" over all
The fatal White Horse in the banner shone.
Round to the left, Argantyr with the Jutes
And Anglians; these for Offa's slaughter wild
T' exact the usurious payment of revenge;
He sternly mindful of that broken fight
By Wye's clear stream, his sword defrauded then
Of its hope-promis'd banquet, Samor's blood.
Above the armed multitude the heights

* Cæterum Arii super vires, quibus enumeratos paullo ante populos antecedunt, truces, insitæ feritati arte ac tempore *lenocinantur; nigra* scuta, tincta corpora: atras ad prœlia noctes legunt: ipsâque *formidine* atque umbrâ feralis exercitûs terrorem inferunt, nullo hostium sustinente novum ac velut infernum aspectum: nam primi in omnibus prœliis oculi vinciuntur.—Tac. Ger. c. 43.

Were crowded with the wives and mothers,* they
With their known presence working shame of flight,
And the high fear of being thought to fear.
With them the spoils of Britain, vessels carv'd,
Statues, and vestments of the Tyrian dye,
Standards with antique legend scroll'd, of deeds
Done in old times, and gorgeous arms, and cups,
And lamps, and plate, or by fantastic art
Minister'd to fond luxury's wayward choice,
Or consecrate to th' altar use of God.

And there the Saxon Gods, the wood and stone
To which that people knelt, and deified
Their own hands' work; the Father of the race
Woden, all arm'd and crown'd; the tempest Lord,
The thunder-shaking Thor,† twelve radiant stars
His coronet, and sceptred his right hand;

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* —et in proximo pignora: unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus infantium; hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores. Ad matres, ad conjuges vulnera ferunt: nec illæ numerare, aut exigere plagas pavent. Cibosque et hortamina pugnantibus gestant.—Tac. Ger.

† This great reputed god, being of more estimate than many of the rest of like sort, though of as little worth as any of the meanest of that rabble, was majestically placed in a very large and spacious hall, and there set, as if he had reposed himself upon a covered bed. On his head he wore a crowne of gold, and round in compasse above, and about the same, were set, or fixed, twelve bright burnished golden starres. And in his right hand he held a kingly scepter.—Verstegan, Restitution of Decayed Intelligence, page 74. This old author gives engravings of these Deities.

The Saxons had besides these the Idoll, Ermensewl, in great reputation, his name of Ermensewl, or Ermesewl, being as much as to say, as the Pillar or Stay of the Poore. This God (or more truely Divell) was made

Upon his stately couch reclining: fierce
In his mysterious multitude of signs,
Arminsul: and th' Unnameable,* he fix'd
On his flint pedestal, his skelcton shape
Garmented scantly in a winding sheet,
And in his hand a torchblaze, lighting up
Earth's utmost bounds. In act to spring, one paw
Upon his head, upon his shoulder one,
His faithful Lion ramp'd in sculptur'd ire.
Southward, its crescent with out-stretching horns
Circling the foe, lay stretch'd the British camp;
King Emrys led the centre, on the right
Pendragon, on the left th' Armoric King,
With all his tall steeds and brave riders; they
The fathers of that fam'd chivalric race
Of knights and ladies, glorious in old song,
White-handed Iseult, Launcelot of the Lake,

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armed, standing among flowers. In his right hand he held a staffe, having at it a banner, wherein was painted a read Rose. In his other hand he held a paire of ballance, and upon his head was placed a Cocke. On his breast was carved a Beare, and before his middle was fixed a scutcheon, in chief whereof was also a pair of ballance, in face a Lion, and in point a Rose; and this Idoll the Franks and the other Germans, as well as the Saxons, did serve and adore.—Page 79.

* They adored also the Idoll Flint, who had that name for his being set upon a great flint stone. This Idoll was made like the Image of Death, save only a sheet about him. In his right hand he held a torch, or, as they termed it, a fire-blase. On his head a Lion rested his two fore-feet, standing with the one of his hinder feet upon his left shoulder, and with the other in his hand, which, to support, he lifted up as high as his shoulder.—Page 80.

Chaste Perceval, that won the Sangreal quest.
But every where and in all parts alike
The Avenger held his post; all heard his voice,
All felt his presence, all obey'd his sway.
As western hurricane whirls up from earth,
And bears where'er it will, the loose-sheaf'd corn,
The fluttering leaves, the shatter'd forest boughs,
Even so his spirit seiz'd and bore along,
And swept with it those proud brigades. With him
Rode forth young Malwyn, he his helmet wore
Light shadow'd by an eagle plume, so sued
His sire; lest in the wildering battle met
Their cars should clash in impious strife; nor sought
The father more obedience from the son,
For Britain and with Samor fix'd to war.
And in his brown and weather-beaten arms
Came Vortimer, a pine-tree stem his mace,
That clove the air with desultory sweep.
But by the river brows'd a single steed,
Sable as one of that poetic pair,
On the fair plain of Enna, in the yoke
Of Pluto, when Proserpina let fall
From her soft lap her flowers, and mourn'd their loss
Lavish, nor for herself reserv'd her tears.
The horseman, not unlike that ravisher,
Wore kingly aspect, and his step and mien
As though his realm were in a gloomier clime,
Amid a drearier atmosphere, 'mid things

Sluggish and melancholy, slow and dead.
As though disclaimed by each, and claiming none,
He lay, with cold impartial apathy
Eyeing both hosts, as though their fates to him
Were equal, and not worth the toil of hope.
But over either army silence hung,
Silence long, heavy, deep, as if each heart
Were busied with eternity; all thoughts
Seem'd bidding farewell to the Sun, whose rise
They saw, whose setting they might never see.
And all the heavens were thinly overdrawn
With light and golden clouds, as though to couch
The angels and the spirits floating there;
While heaven the lucid hierarchy pour'd forth
To view that solemn spectacle beneath,
A battle waged for freedom and for faith.
First rose a clamour and a crowding rush
On the hill side, and a half-stifled cry,
"The Prophetess! the Prophetess!" was heard.
Upon a waggon, 'mid her idol Gods,
She of the seal'd lip and the haunted heart,
The aged Virgin* sate; her thin grey hair
And hollow eyes with a strange sparkling ting'd.
Twice in the memory of the oldest spake
Her voice! when Gothic Alaric had set

* Vetere apud Germanos more, quo plerasque feminarum fatidicas, et augescente superstitione, arbitrantur deas. Tac. Hist. 4—61.

His northern ensign on Rome's shatter'd walls,
That day, along the linden-shadow'd Elbe
She went, with bitter smile and broken song
That mock'd at grandeur fall'n, and pride in dust.
Once more, when Vortigern in that fam'd feast
Crown'd the fierce Hengist; in the German woods
She roam'd, with lofty and triumphal tone
Shrieking of sceptres dancing in her sight,
And Woden's sons endiadem'd, that rose,
And swept, and glitter'd past her. Now with eye
Restless, and churning lip, she sate, and thrice
She mutter'd—"Flight! Flight! Flight!" Then look'd she out
Upon the orient Sun, and cried, "Down! down!"
Then westward turn'd she, and withdrew her hand
From dallying with her loose and hanging chin,
And beckon'd to the faint remaining haze
Of twilight. "Back, fair darkness, beauteous gloom,
Back!" Still the Sun came on, the shades dispell'd.
Then rose she up, then on the vacant space
Between both armies fix'd her eye; half laugh,
Half agony her cheek relax'd. "I see,
I see you, ye Invisible! I hear,
Soundless, I hear you! Choosers of the slain!
Ye of the white forms hors'd on thunder clouds!
Ye of Valhalla! colourless as air,
As air impalpable! wind on and urge
Your sable and self-govern'd steeds; they come,

They whom your mantling hydromel awaits,
Whose cups are crown'd, the guests of this night's feast.
They come, they come, for whom the Gods shall leap
From their cloud thrones, and ask you whom ye bring
In stern troops crowding to their secret joy."
She shook her low-dropt lip, and thus went on:
"The bow is broken, and the shafts are snapt;
The lance is shiver'd, and the buckler rent;
The helm is cloven, and the plumes are shed;
The horse hath founder'd, and the rider fallen;
The Crown'd are crownless, kingdomless the Kings;
The Conquerors conquer'd, and the Slayers slain!
One falls not, but he shall not stand! the axe
Shall glean th' imperfect harvest of the sword;
The scaffold drink the lees of battle's cup.
And one is woundless amid myriad wounds,
And one is wounded where there is but one."
She had not ended, when a single steed
Burst furious from the British line: with flight
That seemed to tread the air, and not the earth,
Fierce and direct he hurried to the charge
His youthful Rider. Upright sate the Boy
Arthur, at first with half reverted look,
As to his mother to impart his joy,
His transport. Early, oh fame-destin'd Child!
Putt'st thou thy sickle in the field of fame.
Over his head a dome of fiery darts,
And cross-bow bolts, vaults o'er th' encumber'd air.

Yet forward swept the child his rapid course,
And all at once to rescue all the Chiefs
Rush'd onward: Uther's dragon seem'd to burn
The winds with its hot waving; Emrys struck
His courser's reeking flanks, his weapon huge
Rear'd Vortimer, and Malwyn's wheels 'gan whirl.
And on the other side Argantyr tall,
Hengist and Horsa, all the titled brave,
Burst from their tardy lines, that vast behind
Came rolling in tumultuous order on.
As when at spring-time under the cold pole
Two islands high of ice warp heavy and huge
Upon the contrary currents: first th' assault
The promontories break, till meets the whole
With one long crash, that wakes the silence, there
Seated since time was born; far off and wide
Rock'd by the conflict fierce old ocean boils.
Still th' upright Child seem'd only to rejoice
In the curvettings of his wanton steed,
And in the mingled dazzling of bright arms.
But over him a shield is spread, before
A sword is wav'd; on every side the shield
Repels each deadly blow, whirls everywhere
The rapid and unwearied sword; the rein
Of the fleet steed hath Samor grasp'd, and guides
Amid the turmoil. As when the eagle sire
Up in the sunshine leads his daring young,
Sometimes the dusk shade of his wing spreads o'er,

And soft and broken through the mantling plumes
Gleams the unblinding splendour. So secure
Wag'd that fair Child his early war. But wild
The wavering fray rock'd to and fro, and burnt
Like one huge furnace the quick-flashing plain.
Ever, as 'twere the same the Apostle saw
In the Apocalypse, Death's own pale steed,
Over the broad fight shook the White Horse; spread,
Where'er its gleaming lighten'd the dun gloom,
Steamy and vast the curdling slaughter pools.
And such confusion burst around of lines
Mingling and interchanging, Valour found
No space for proud selection, forc'd to strike
What cumber'd and obstructed its free path;
To hew out through a mass of vulgar life
A passage to some princely foe. Twice met
Horsa and Vortimer; Argantyr twice
Smote at Pendragon; but the whirlpool fierce
Asunder swept them, and the deep of war
Swallow'd them; many a broad and shapeless chasm
Was rent in either battle, but new fronts
Rush'd in, and made the shiver'd surface whole.
The sun was shut out by a sphere of dust
That wrapt the tumult: 'twas no sight for Heaven
That rending and defacing its prime work,
That waste of man, its masterpiece. But far
Th' Avenger had borne off the Child, his steed
First drew his breath before Igerna's tent.

With her soft face upon the dust she lay,
Struggling to hush her own lament, in hope
From the fierce din of war might haply come
Some sound of cheer and comfort; yet when full
It rush'd upon her hearing, loud she shriek'd
To drown the very noise she strove to hear.
But when her Child's voice sounded, she look'd up
With a cold glance which said, "that sound I've heard
Every sad moment since he went, my soul
Is sick of self-deception, will not trust
Again, to be again beguil'd." She saw,
And forc'd a sportive look to her sad face
To lure him to her snowy arms. While he
Back to the battle as a scene of joy
Look'd waywardly, she clasp'd him to her breast
With a fond anger, and both smil'd and wept.
A moment Samor gaz'd on her, and—"All
All have their hopes, and all those hopes fulfill'd,
But I, this side the grave no hope for me
And no fulfilment." Fast as sight could track
The battle felt him in its thousand folds.

But the undistinguished and chance-mingled fight
Young Malwyn brook'd not; he his virgin shield
Disdain'd mean blood should stain: where Hengist fought
He swept, the Saxon saw the eagle plume
And turn'd aloof, and on some other head
Discharg'd the blow for him uprear'd. But he
Next plung'd, where Horsa's starlike weapon shone,

Disastrous, shaking ruin; yet even that
Glanc'd aside from the eagle plume. The Boy
Utter'd a wrathful disappointed cry,
And 'gainst Argantyr drove his car. He paus'd
And cried aloud, "the eagle plume," and plung'd
Elsewhere for victims. That Pendragon heard,
Even as he toil'd the third time to make way
Amid' the circling slain to the Anglian crest,
And taunting thus,—"Methinks the eagle plume
Hath some few feathers of the dove, so soft
Spreads its peace-breathing influence." But the Youth,
"Ha, Father! thus, thus guil'st thou to a faint
And infamous security thy son?
Thus enviest thou a noble foe? thus guard'st
With a base privilege from peril? Off,
Coward distinction! off, faint-hearted sign!"
And helm and plume away he rent, his hair
Curl'd down his shoulders, radiant on his brow
The beauty of his anger shone, the pride
Of winning thus a right to glorious death.
Then set he forth on his bold quest again
Impatient. Him Prince Vortimer beheld
Sweeping between himself and Horsa, met
Their sea-shore fight by Thanet to renew;
But something of his sister in his face,
Something of Lilian harden'd and grown fierce,
As if the ungodly creed were true, and she,
Familiar to rude deeds of blood, had come

One of Valhalla's airy sisters hence
To summon him she lov'd: that gleam of her,
Albeit ungentle and unfeminine, still
Exquisite, in 'mid air his rugged mace
Suspended; but fierce Horsa on the Boy,
Just on his neck, let fall the fatal spikes,
And him the affrighted steeds bore off. And then
Began a combat over which Death seem'd
To hover, as of one assur'd, in hope
Of both for victims at his godless shrine.
Then wounded and bareheaded Malwyn urged
On Hengist his remaster'd steeds, the scythe
Ras'd his majestic war horse. But aside
He sprung, and flank'd the chariot; long the strife,
Long, though unequal: like a serpent's tongue
Vibrated Malwyn's battle axe, twice bow'd
The Monarch to his saddle bow.—'Twas fame
More splendid, thus with Hengist to have fought
Than to have conquer'd hosts of meaner men.
Heavy at length and fatal glided in
The wily Chief's eluding falchion stroke.
Fast flew the steeds, the master lay behind,
Dragging with his face downward, still the reins
Cling in his cold and failing fingers, trail
His neck and spread locks in the humid dust,
His sharp arms character the yielding sand.*

* Parte aliâ fugiens amissis Troïlus armis,
Infelix puer, atque impar congressus Achilli,

On fly they, him at length deserting mute
And gasping on the bank, their hot hoofs plunge
Into the limpid Dune, and to the wood
Rove on. It chanc'd erewhile that thither came
To freshen with the water his spent steeds,
And lave the clogging carnage from his wheels,
Caswallon. He his huge and weary length
Cast for brief rest upon the bank; a groan
Came from a helmless head that in the grass
Lay undistinguish'd. "'Tis a Briton," cried
Caswallon, "cast the carrion off to feed
The dogs and kites, that thus irreverent breaks
Upon its monarch's rest." Even as a flower,
Poppy or hyacinth, on its broken stem,
Languidly raises its encumber'd head,
And turns it to the gentle evening sun:
So feebly rose, so turn'd that Boy his face
Unto the well-known voice; twice rais'd his head,
Twice it fell back in powerless heaviness.
Even at that moment from the dark wood came,
Lured by their partners in the stall and field,
His chariot coursers, heavily behind
Dragging the vacant car, loose hung the reins,
And mournfulness and dull disorder slack'd
The spirit of their tread. Caswallon knew,

Fertur equis, currûque hæret resupinus inani,
Lora tenens tamen; huic cervixque comæque trahuntur
Per terram, et versâ pulvis inscribitur hastâ.—VIRGIL. ÆN.

And he leap'd up; the Boy his bloodless lips
With a long effort opened. "Was it well,
Father, at this my first, my earliest fight,
To mock me with a baffled hope of fame?
Well was it to defraud me of my right
To noble death?"—and speaking thus he died.
Above him his convuls'd unconscious hands
Horribly sporting with his shaggy beard,
Wrenching and twisting off the rooted locks,
Yet senseless of the pain, the Father lean'd.
Then leap'd he up, with cool and jealous care
Within his chariot plac'd the lifeless corpse;
And with his lash fierce rent the half-unyok'd
Half-harness'd steeds; disorderly and swift
As with their master's ire instinct they flew,
Making a wide road through the hurtling fray.
Briton or Saxon, friend or foe alike,
Kinsman or stranger, one wide enmity
'Gainst general humankind, one infinite
And undistinguishing lust of carnage, fill'd
The Master and the coursers; so wild groans
Follow'd where'er he mov'd, 'twas all to him,
So slaughter dripp'd and reek'd from the chok'd scythes.
The low lay mow'd like the spring grass, down swept
On th' eminent, like lightning on the oaks,
His battle axe, each time it fell each time
A life was gone, each time a hideous laugh
Shone on the Slayer's cheek and writhing lip.

As in the oriental wars where meet
Sultan and Omrah, under his broad tower
Moves stately the huge Elephant, a shaft
Haply cast down his friendly rider, wont
To lead him to the tank, whose children shar'd
With him their feast of fruits: awhile he droops
Affectionate his loose and moaning trunk:
Then in his grief and vengeance bursts, and bears
In his fierce trampling rout and disarray
To either army, ranks give way, and troops
Scatter, while swaying on his heaving back
His tottering tower, he shakes the sandy plain.
Meanwhile had risen a conflict dread and fierce
For Britain's royal banner; Hengist here,
Argantyr, the Vikinger, Hermingard,
And other Chiefs. But there th' Armoric King,
Emrys, and Uther, with the Avenger stood,
An iron wall against their inroad; turn'd
Samor 'gainst him at distance heard and seen,
The car-borne Mountaineer, then Uther met
Argantyr, Hengist and King Emrys fought,
The rest o'erbore King Hoel; one had slain
The standard bearer, and all seiz'd at once
The falling banner, all with hostile hand.
When lo! that sable Warrior, that retir'd
And careless had look'd on, upon his steed
And in the battle: like a thundercloud
He came, and like a thundercloud he burst,

Black, silent, sullen, conquering without pride
And slaying without triumph ; three that grasp'd
The standard came at once to earth, while he
Over his head with kingly motion sway'd
The bright redeemed ensign, and as fell
The shaken sunlight radiant o'er his brow,
Pride came about him, and with voice like joy
He cried aloud, " Arles ! Arles !" and shook his sword,
" Thou'st won me once a royal crown, and now
Shalt win a royal sepulchre." The sword
Perform'd its fatal duty, down they fell
Before him, Jute and Saxon, nameless men
And Chieftains ; what though wounds he scorn'd to ward,
Nor seem'd to feel, show'r'd on him, and his blood
Ooz'd manifest, still he slew, still cried, " Arles ! Arles !"
Still in the splendour the wav'd standard spread
Stood glorying the arm'd darkness of his form ;
Stood from his wounded steed dismounted ; stood
Amid an area of dead men, himself
About to die, none daring an assault,
He powerless of assailing. But the crown
That on the flag-staff gleam'd he wrench'd away,
And on his crest with calm solicitude
Plac'd it, then planting 'mid the high-heap'd slain
The standard, to o'ercanopy his sleep,
As one upon his nightly couch of down
Composes quietly his weary head,
So royally he laid him down to die.

But now was every fight broke off, a pause
Seized all the battle, one vast silence quench'd
All tumult; slain and slayer, life and death
One torpor cover'd; droop'd at once and fail'd
All passions, pride, wrath, vengeance, hate, dismay,
All was one wide astonishment: save two
That undistracted on each other gazed,
Where helpless in their death-blood they lay steep'd,
And slowly ebbed away each life, till first
Horsa groan'd forth his fiery soul: then came
A momentary tinge, soft and subdued
As of affections busy at his heart,
On Vortimer's expiring brow; his lip
Had something of the curl men wear, when names
Belov'd are floating o'er the thought; the flowers
On that lone grave made fragrant his sick sense,
And Eamont murmured on his closing ear.

But he, whose coming cast this silence on
Before it, as the night its widening shade,
Curtaining nature in its soundless pall:
An atmosphere of dying breath, where'er
He moved, his drear envelopment; his path
An element of blood: so fleet, so fast
The power to fly seem'd wither'd, ere he came,
Men laid them down and said their prayers and look'd
For the quick plunging hoofs and rushing scythes.
As when the palsied Universe aghast
Lay, all its tenants, even Man, restless Man,

In all his busy working mute and still,
When drove, so poets sing, the Sun-born youth,
Devious through heaven's affrighted signs, his Sire's
Ill-granted chariot; him the Thunderer hurl'd
From th' empyrean headlong to the gulf
Of the half-parch'd Eridanus, where weep
Even now the Sister Trees their amber tears
O'er Phaeton untimely dead. And now
Had the Avenger reach'd the path of death,
And stood in arms before the steeds, they came
Rearing their ireful hoofs to dash him down;
But with both hands he seiz'd their foaming curbs,
Holding them in their spring with outstretch'd arm
Aloft, and made their lifted crests a shield
Against their driver. He with baffled lash
Goaded their quivering flanks, but that strong arm
Held them above avoiding, their fore-hoofs
Beat th' unhurt air, and the fast-falling foam,
Like a thick snow-shower, overspread his breast,
Then leap'd Caswallon down, back Samor hurl'd
Coursers and chariot, and, "Now," cried aloud,
"Now, King of Britain, in the name of God
I tender thee a throne, two yards of earth
To rot on, and a diadem, a wreath
Of death-drops for thy haught aspiring brow."
"There, there, look there," Caswallon cried, his hand
Stretch'd tow'rd his son, and in a frantic laugh
Broke out, and echoed, "Diadems and thrones!"

With rigid finger pointing at the dead.
A moment, and the fury broke again;
Down came the ponderous battle-axe, from edge
To edge it rived the temper'd brass, as swift
As shot-stars the thin ether; but the glaive
Of Samor right into his bosom smote.
Like some old turret, under whose broad shade
At summer noon the shepherd oft his flock
Hath driven, and in the friendly cool rejoic'd;
Suddenly, violently, from its base
Push'd by the winter floods, he fell; his look
Yet had its savage blasphemy: he felt
More than the blow, the deadly blow, the cries
Of joy and triumph from each army sent,
Vaunting and loud; to him to die was nought,
He could not brook the shame of being slain.
But other thoughts arose; hardly he crept
To where dead Malwyn from the car hung down,
Felt on his face the cold depending hand,
And with a smile half joy, half anguish, died.
Th' Avenger knelt, his heart too full for prayer,
Knelt, and held up his conquering sword to heaven,
Yet spake not. But the battle, as set free,
Its rugged game renew'd, nor equal now
Nor now unbroken; Flight and shameful Rout
Here scattered, Victory there and Pride, array'd,
And mass'd in comely files and full square troops,
Bore onward. Mountaineer and German break

Around the hill foot, and like ebbing waves
Disperse away. Argantyr, Hengist move
In the recoiling flood reluctant. Them
Nought more resembled than two mountain bulls
Driven by the horse and dog and hunter spear,
Still turning with huge brow and tearing up
The deep earth with their wrathful stooping horns.
But as the hill was opened, from the top
Even to the base ran down a shriek and scream,
As when some populous Capital besieg'd
Sees yawning her wide-breached wall, and all
Her shatter'd bulwarks on the earth, so wild,
So dissonant the female rout appear'd
Hanging with fierce disturbance the hill side.
Some with rent hair ran to and fro, some stood
With silent mocking lip, some softly press'd
Their infants to their heart, some held them forth
As to invite the foe, and thus implore
The mercy of immediate slaughter. Some
Spake fiercely of past deeds of fame, some sang
In taunting tone old songs of victory. Wives
With eye imploring and quick heaving breast
Look'd sad allusions to endearments past;
Mothers, all bashfulness cast off, rent down
Their garments, to their sons displaying bare *

* This, if I remember right, was suggested by the description of the defeat of the Cimbri by Marius, in Plutarch. Vit. Marii, c. 27.

The fountains of their infant nourishment,
Now ready to be pierc'd with murtherous swords.
Some knelt before their cold deaf Gods, some scoff'd
With imprecation blasphemous and shrill
Their stony and unwakening thunders. Noise
Not fiercer on Cithæron side, th' affright
Not drearier, when the Theban Bacchic rout,
Their dashing cymbals white with moonshine, loose
Their tresses bursting from their ivy crowns,
And purple with enwoven vine-leaves, led
Their orgies dangerous. In the midst the Queen
Agave shook the misdeem'd Lion's head
Aloft, and laugh'd and danc'd and sung, nor knew
That lion suckled at her own white breast.*
But Elfelin the Prophetess her place
Chang'd not, nor the near horror could recal
Her eye from its strange commerce with th' unseen.
There had she sate, there had she sate in smiles
All the long battle; just before the spear
Or falchion drank a warrior's life-blood, she
Audible, as an high-tribunal'd judge,
Spake out his name, and still her speech was doom.
Nor long the o'erbearing flight enwrapt thy strength,
Argantyr! thou amid the shattering wreck
Didst rise, as in some ruinous city old,
Babylon or Palmyra, magic-built,

* See the striking scene in the Bacchanals of Euripides.

A single pillar yet with upright shaft
Stands, 'mid the wide prostration mossy and flat,
Shewing more eminent. Rush'd the Saxon by,
And look'd and wonder'd, even that he delay'd;
Cried his own Anglians—"King, away, away!"
First came King Hoel on, whose falchion clove
His buckler, with a wrest he burst in twain
The shivering steel; came Emrys next, aside
His misaim'd blow he shook; last Uther, him
His war horse, by Argantyr's beam-like spear
Then first appall'd, bore in vain anger past.

From his late victory in proud breathlessness
Slow came the Avenger, but Argantyr rais'd
A cry of furious joy, "Long sought, late found,
I charge thee, by our interrupted fight,
I charge thee, give me back mine own! my sword
Weary of bathing thus in vulgar gore
Thirsts in some nobler blood to plunge; with thine
I'll gild and hang it on my Father's grave,
And his helm'd ghost in Woden's hall shall vaunt
The glories of his son."—"Generous and brave,
When last we met, I shrunk to see my sword
Bright with God's sunlight, now with dauntless hand
I lift it, and cry 'On, in the name of God.'"

They met, they strove, as with a cloud enwrapt
In their own majesty; their motions gave
Terror even to their shadows; round them spread
Attention like a sleep. Flight paus'd, Pursuit

Caught up its loose rein, Death his furious work
Ceas'd, and a dreary respite gave to souls
Half parted; on their elbows rear'd them up
The dying, with faint effort holding ope
Their dropping eyelids, homage of delight
War from its victims thus exacting. Mind
And body engross'd the conflict. Men were seen
At distance (for in their peculiar sphere,
Within the wind and rush of their quick arms
None ventur'd) following with unconscious limbs
Their blows, and shrinking as themselves were struck.
Like scatter'd shiverings of a scath'd oak lay
Fragments of armour round them, the hard brass
Gave way, and broke the fiery temper'd steel:
The stronger metal of the human soul,
Valour, endur'd; and power, thrice purified
In Danger's furnace, fail'd not. Victory, tired
Of wavering, to those passive instruments,
Look'd to decide her long suspense. Behold
Argantyr's falchion, magic-wrought, his sires
So fabled, by the Asgard dwarfs, nor hewn
From earthly mines, nor dipp'd in earthly fires,
Broke short. The Anglians saw the ancestral steel,
Sign of their Kings, and worship of their race,
Give way, and wail'd and shriek'd aloud. The King
Collected all his glory, as a pall
To perish in, and scorn'd his sworded foe
To mock with vain defence of unarm'd hand.

The exultation and fierce throb of hope
Yet had not pass'd away, but look'd to death
As it had look'd to conquest, death, so well,
So bravely earn'd, to warrior fair as life:
Stern welcoming, bold invitation lured
To its last work the Conqueror's sword. Him flush'd
The pride of Conquest, vengeance long delay'd,
Th' exalted shame of victory won so slow,
So toilsomely; all fiery passions, all
Tumultuous sense-intoxicating powers,
Conspir'd, with their wild anarchy beset
His despot soul. But he—"Ah, faithless sword,
To me as to thy master faithless, him
Naked at his extreme to leave, and me
To 'guile of this occasion fair to win
Honour or death from great Argantyr's arm."
"Christian, thy God is mightiest, scorn not thou
His bounty, nor with dalliance mock thy hour—
Strike and consummate!"—"Anglian, yes, my God,
Th' Almighty, is the mightiest now and ever,
Because I scorn him not, I will not strike."
So saying, he his sword cast down. "Thus, thus
Warr'st thou?" the Anglian cried, "then thou hast won.
I, I Argantyr yield me; other hand
Had tempted me in vain with that base boon
Which peasants prize and women weep for, life:
To lord o'er dead Argantyr fate might grant,
He only grants to vanquish him alive,

Only to thee, well nam'd Avenger!" Then
Both hosts the Captive and the Conquëror saw
Gazing upon each other with the brow
Of high-arch'd admiration., O'er the field
From that example flow'd a noble scorn
Of slaughtering the defenceless; mercy slak'd
The ardour of the fight. As the speck'd birch
After a shower with the odour of its bark
Freshens the circuit of the rain-bright grove;
Or as the tender argent of Love's star
Smiles to a lucid quiet the wild sky:
So those illustrious rivals with the light
Of their high language and heroic act
Cast a nobility o'er all the war.
That capture took a host, none scorn'd to yield,
So loftily Argantyr wore the garb
Of stern surrender; none inclin'd to slay,
When Samor held the signal up to spare.
But where the Lord of that dire falchion nam'd
The Widower of Women? He, the Chief
Whose arms were squadrons, whose assault the shock
Of hosts advancing? Hath the cream-blanch'd steed,
Whom the outstripp'd winds pant after, borne away
His master, yet with hope uncheck'd, and craft
Unbaffled, th' equal conflict to renew?
Fast flew the horse, and fierce the rider spurr'd,
That horse that all the day remorseless went
O'er dead and dying, all that Hengist slew

All he cast down before him. Lo, he checks
Suddenly, startingly, with ears erect,
Thick tremor oozing out from every pore,
His broad chest palpitating, the thick foam
Lazily gathering on his dropping lip:
The pawing of his uplift forefoot chill'd
To a loose hanging quiver. Nor his Lord
Less horror seiz'd; slack trembled in his left
The bridle, with his right hand dropt his sword,
Dripp'd slowly from its point the flaking blood
Of hundreds, this day fall'n beneath its edge.

For lo, descended the hill side, stood up
Right in his path the Prophetess, and held
With a severe compassion both her arms
Over her head, and thus—"It cannot be,
I've cried unto the eagle, air hath none;
I've sued unto the fleet and bounding deer,
I've sought unto the sly and mining snake;
There's none above the earth, beneath the earth,
No flight, no way, no narrow obscure way.
I've call'd unto the lightning, as it leap'd
Along heaven's verge, it cannot guide thee forth;
I've beckon'd to the dun and pitchy gloom,
It cannot shroud thee; to the caves of earth
I've wail'd and shriek'd, they cannot chamber thee."

He spoke not, mov'd not, strove not: man and steed,
Like some Equestrian marble in the courts
Of Emperors; that fierce eye whose wisdom keen

Pierc'd the dark depths of counsel, hawk-like roved,
Seizing the unutter'd thoughts from out men's souls,
Wrought order in the battle's turbulent fray
By its command, on the aged Woman's face
Fix'd like a moonstruck idiot. She upright
With strength beyond her bow'd and shrivell'd limbs
Still stood and murmur'd low, "Why com'st thou not,
Thou of the Vale? thou fated, come! come! come!"
The foes o'ertook, he look'd not round, their tramp
Was round him, still he mov'd not; hostile hands
Seiz'd on him, still the enchanted falchion hung
Innocent as a feather by his side.
They tore him from his steed, still clung his eyes
On her disastrous face; she fiercely shriek'd
Half pride at her accomplish'd prophecy,
Half sorrow at Erle Hengist's fall; then down
Upon the stone that bore her, she fell dead.

BOOK XII.

ARGUMENT.

Triumph of the Britons. London. Solemn assembly on the site of modern Westminster. Trial of the prisoners. Argantyr. Hengist. Burial of Vortigern in the Cemetery, now Westminster Abbey. Rowena. Condemnation of Hengist. Execution of Hengist. Death of Rowena.

OH Freedom, of our social Universe
The Sun, that feedest from thy urn of light
Our starlike commonwealth; from those mean lamps
Modestly glimmering in their sphere retir'd,
Even to the plenar and patrician orbs,
That in their rich nobility of light,
Or golden royalty endiadem'd,
Their mystic circle undisturb'd round thee
Move musical; but thou, thy central state
Preserving, equably the fair-rank'd whole
In dutiful magnificence maintain'st,
And stately splendour of obedience. Earth
Wonders, th' approval of th' Almighty beams
Manifest in the glory of the work.

Though sometimes drown'd within the red eclipse
Of tyranny, or brief while by the base
And marshy exhalations of low vice,
And popular licence madden'd, thou hast flash'd
Disastrous and intolerable fire;
Yet, ever mounting, hast thou still march'd on
To thy meridian throne. My waxen wing
Oh, quenchless luminary! may not soar
To that thy dazzling and o'erpowering noon;
Rather the broken glimpses of thy dawn
Visiting, when thy orient overcast
A promise and faint foretaste of its light
Beam'd forth, then plung'd its cloud-slak'd front in gloom.
Even with such promise dost thou now adorn
Thy chosen city by the Thames, where holds
Victorious Emrys his high Judgment court.
Thither the long ovation hath he led,
Amid the solemn music of rent chains,
The rapture of deliverance; where he pass'd
Earth brightened, and the face of man, but now
Brow-sear'd with the deep brand of servitude,
Its old and upright privilege resumed
Of gazing on his kindred heaven. The towns
Gladden'd amid their ruins, churches shook
With throngs of thankful votaries,* till 'twas fear'd

* Then did Aurelius Ambrosius put the Saxons out of all other parts of the land, and repaired such cities, towns, and also churches, as by them had been destroyed or defaced, &c. Hol. Book 6, Chap. 8.

Transport might finish Desolation's work,
And the glad crowd o'erthrow the half-moulder'd walls.
'Tis fam'd, men died for joy, untimely births
Were frequent, as the eager mothers press'd
To show their infants to the brightening world.
They that but now beheld the bier-borne dead
With miserable envy, pass'd them by
Contemptuously pitying, as too soon
Departed from this highly gifted earth.
So they the Trinobantine City reach'd.
Without the walls, close by the marge of Thames,
The synod of the Conquerors met; a place
Solemn and to the soul discoursing high.
Here broad the bridgeless Thames, even like themselves
Thus at their flush and high tide of renown,
Swell'd his exulting waters. There all waste
The royal cemetery of Britain lay,
The monuments, like their cold tenantry,
Mouldering, above all ruin, as beneath,
A wide profound, drear sameness of decay.
Upon the Church of Christ had heavily fallen
The Pagan desolation, loose the doors
Hung on their broken and disused hinge,
And grass amid the chequer'd pavement squares
Was springing, and along the vacant choir
The shrill wind was God's only worshipper.
Even where they met, through the long years have sate
In Parliament our nation's high and wise.

There have deep thoughts been ponder'd, strong designs
On which the fate of the round world hath hung.
Thence have the emanating rays of truth,
Freedom, and constancy, and holiness,
Flow'd in their broad beneficence, no bound
Owning but that which limits this brief earth,
Brightening this misty state of man; the winds
That thence bear mandates to th' inconstant thrones
Of Europe, to the realms of th' orient Sun,
Or to the new and ocean-sever'd earth,
Or to the Southern cocoa-feather'd isles,
Are welcome, as pure gales of health and joy.
Still that deep dwelling underneath the earth
Its high and ancient privilege maintains,
Dark palace of our island's parted Kings,
Earth-ceil'd pavilion of our brave and wise,
Disus'd for two long ages, it became
The pavement of our sumptuous minster fair,
That ever and anon yet gathers in
King, Conqu'ror, Poet, Orator, or Sage
To her stone chambers, there to sleep the sleep
That wakens only at the Archangel's trump.*
First in the synod rose King Emrys; he,
The royal sword of justice from his side

* Little did I foresee, when I wrote this as a youth, that, long years after, at the time that I should be correcting it for republication, I should lay to rest in this hallowed place (Westminster Abbey) a lovely little girl, whose early intelligence gave me the fond hope that she would hereafter take an

Ungirding, plac'd it in the Avenger's hand,
And led him to the judgment-seat. He shrunk,
And offer'd back the solemn steel. "Oh! King,
Judge and Avenger! who shall reconcile
The discord of those titles, private wrongs
Will load my partial arm, and drag to earth
The unsteady balance. Only God can join
And blend in one the Injur'd and the Judge."
But as a wave lifts up and bears along
A stately bark, so the acclamation swell
Floated into the high Tribunal throne
Reluctant Samor: on his right the King
Sate sceptred, royal Uther on the left:
While all around the assembled Nation bask'd
In his effulgent presence. 'Twas a boast
In after ages this day to have seen
Him whom all throng'd to see; memory of him,
Each recollection of his mien and height,
Became a heir-loom; mothers at the font
Gave to their babes his name, and e'er that child
Was held the staff and honour of the race.

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interest in my pursuits, and love my poetry, at least, because it was her father's—

> My child! my child! among the great and wise,
> Thou 'st had thy peaceful solemn obsequies,
> Seem'st thou misplac'd in that fam'd company?
> Heaven's kingdom is made up of such as thee.

February 4, 1839.

So met the Nation in their Judgment Hall,
Its pavement was the sacred mother earth,
Its roof the crystal and immortal heavens.
Then forth the captives came, Argantyr first,
Even with his wonted loftiness of tread:
Nature's rich heraldry upon his brow
Emblazing him of those whose scorn the world
Bears unasham'd, by whom to be despis'd
Is no abasement. Men's eyes rang'd from him
To Samor, back to him—in wonder now
At conquest o'er such mighty foe, now lost
The wonder in their kindred Conqueror's pride.
Then said the Anglian—"Wherefore lead ye here?"
The sternness of his questioning appall'd
All save the Judge. "What Briton," he replied,
"Witnesseth aught against the Anglian Chief?"
Thereat was proclamation, East and West
And North and South: the silent winds came back
With wings unloaded: so that noble mien
Wrought conquest o'er man's darkest passions, hate,
And doubt, and terror, so the Captive cast
His yoke on every soul, and harness'd it
Unto his valiant spirit's chariot wheels.
Then spake the stately and tribunal'd Judge—
"Anglian Argantyr! Britain is not wont
T' inflict upon a fair and open foe
Aught penal but defeat; her warfare bows
Beneath her feet but tramples not; her throne

Hath borne the stormy brunt of thy assault,
And dash'd it off, and thus she saith, 'Return,
Return unto thy German woods, nor more,
Once baffled, vex our coasts with fruitless war.
And thy return shall be to years remote
Our bond and charter of security;
A terror and a trembling at our name
Shall pass with thee; the land that hath spurn'd back
Argantyr's march of victory, shall be known
T' eternal freedom consecrate. Your ships
Shall plough our seas, but turn their timorous prows
Aloof, while on the deck the Sea King points
To our white cliffs, and saith—'The Anglian thence
Retreated, shun the unconquerable shore.'"—
"So nevermore shall my hot warhorse bathe
In British waters, nor my falchion meet
The bold resistance of a British steel,
Thus wills the Conqueror, thus the Conquer'd swears."
So spake Argantyr; sudden then and swift
Loftier shot up his brow, prophetic hues
Swam o'er his agitated features, words
Came with a rush and instantaneous flow.
"I tell thee, Briton, that thy sons and mine
Shall be two meeting and conflicting tides,
Whose fierce relentless enmity shall lash
This land into a whirlpool deep and wide,
To swallow in its vast insatiate gulf
Her peace and smooth felicity, till flow

Their waters reconcil'd in one broad bed,
Briton and Anglian one in race and name.
'Tis written in the antient solemn Runes,
'Tis spoken by prophetic virgin lips.
Avenger! thou and I our earthly wars
Have ended, but my spirit yet shall hold
Noble, inexorable strife with thine.
It shall heave off its barrow, burst its tomb,
And to my sons discourse of glorious foes
In this rich Island to be met: my shade
Shall cross them in their huntings, it shall walk
The ocean paths, and on the winds, and seize
Their prows, and fill their sails, and all its voice
And all its secret influences urge
To the White Isle: * their slumbers shall not rest,
Their quiet shall be weariness, till lull'd
Upon the pillow of success repose
The high, the long, hereditary feud."
So saying, he the bark, that lay prepar'd
With sail unfurl'd, ascended. She went forth
Momently with quick shadow the blue Thames
Darkening, then leaving on its breast a light
Like silver. The fix'd eyes of wondering men
Track'd his departure, while with farewell gleam
The bright Sun shone upon his brow, and seem'd

* The Welsh called it Inis Wen, the White Island. Speed, B. 5. C. 2. Some derive Britain from Pryd Cain, Beauty and White. Ibid.

A triumph in the motion of the stream;
So loftily upon its long slow ebb
It bore that honour-laden bark.—Nor pause,
Lo, in the presence of the Judgment Court
The second Criminal; pride had not pass'd
Nor majesty from his hoar brow; he stood
With all except the terror of despair,
Consciously in fatality's strong bonds
Manacled, of the coming death assur'd,
Yet fronting the black future with a look
Obdurate even to scornfulness. He seem'd
As he heard nought, as though his occupied ears
Were pervious to no sound, since that dim voice
Of her who speaking died, the silver hair'd,
The Prophetess, that never spake untrue:
As ever with a long unbroken flow
Her song was ranging through his brain, and struck
Its death-knell on his soul. Nor change had come
Since that drear hour to eye or cheek; the craft,
The wisdom that was wont to make him lord
Over the shifting pageant of events,
Had given its trust up to o'er-ruling fate,
And that stern Paramount, Necessity,
Had seal'd him for her own. Amid them all
He tow'r'd, as when the summer thunderbolt
'Mid a rich fleet some storm-accustom'd bark
Hath stricken, round her the glad waters dance,
Her sails are full, her strong prow fronts the waves

But works within the irrevocable doom,
Th' inundant surge wells up her secret hold,
And th' heavy waters weigh her slowly down.
The Judge for the arraignment made a sign.
And the first witness was a mighty cry,
As 'twere the voice of the whole Isle, and hills
And plains and waters their abhorrence spake.
Hoarse harmony of imprecation seem'd
To break the ashy sleep of ruin'd towns,
And th' untomb'd slumbers of far battle fields:
As though the crowd about the Judgment Court
Did only with articulate voice repeat
What indistinct came down on every wind.
Then all the near, the distant, sank away,
Only a low and melancholy tone,
Like a far music down a summer stream
Remain'd; upon the lull'd, nor panting air
Fell that smooth snow of sound, till nearer now
It swell'd, as clearer water-falls are heard
When midnight grows more still. A funeral hymn,
It pour'd the rapture of its sadness out,
Even like a sparkling soporific wine.
But now and then broke from its low long fall
Something of martial and majestic swell,
That spake its mourning o'er no vulgar dead.
Lo to the royal burying place, chance borne
Even at this solemn time, or so ordain'd
From their bright-scutcheon'd biers to bear their part

In this arraignment, came King Vortigern,
And th' honour'd ashes of his Son. But still
And voiceless these cold witnesses passed on,
Unto the place of tombs. Along the Thames
Far floated into silence the spent hymn:
And one accusing sound arose from them,
The heavy falling of their earth to earth.

One female mourner came behind the King,
Half of her face the veil conceal'd, her eyes
Were visible, and though a deadly haze
Film'd their sunk balls, she sent into the grave,
Following the heavy and descending corpse,
A look of such imploring loveliness,
A glance so sad, so self-condemning, men
(So softly, tremulously it appeal'd)
Might wonder that the spirit came not back
To animate for the utterance that she wish'd
Those bloodless lips; forgiveness it was plain
She sought, and one so beauteous to forgive,
The dead might almost wake. And she sate down
Leaning her cheek upon a broken stone
(Once a King's monument) as listening yet
Th' acceptance of her prayers: nor cloister'd Nun
Hath ever since, mourning her broken vows,
And his neglect for whom those vows she broke,
Come to the image of her Virgin Saint
With such a faded cheek and contrite mien,
As she who by those royal ashes sate.

But lo, new witnesses; a matron train
In flowing robes of grief came forth, the wives
And mothers of those nobles foully slain
At the Peace Banquet: them the memory yet
Seem'd haunting of delicious days broke off.
On Hengist, even a captive, dared not they
Look firmly; as their helpless loneliness
Spake for them, they their solitary breasts
Beat, wrung their destitute cold hands, and pass'd.
Then rose the mitred Germain, glanc'd his hand
From that majestic criminal, where lay
The ruins of God's church, and so sate down.
But Samor look'd upon the mourner train,
As though he sought a face that was not there,
That could not be, soft Emeric's.—"I have none,
I only none to witness of my wrongs."—
So said he, but he shook the softness off,
On the tribunal rose severe, and stood
Erect before the multitude. "Thou King,
And ye, assembled People of this Isle,
If that I speak your sentence right, give in
Your sanction of Amen. Here stands the man,
Who two long years laid waste with fire and sword
Your native cities and your altar shrines:
Here stands the man, who by slow fraud and guile
Discrown'd your stately Monarch, Vortigern:
Here stands the man, hath water'd with your blood
The red and sickening herbage of your land:

Here stands the man, that to your peaceful feast
Brought Murder, that grim seneschal, and drugg'd
With your most noble blood your friendly cups."
And at each charge came in the deep Amen,
Even like the sounds men hear on stormy nights,
When many thunders are abroad. Nought moved
Stood Hengist, if emotion o'er him pass'd,
Twas likest an elate contemptuous joy
And glorying in those lofty worded crimes.
Then, "Saxon Hengist, as thy sword hath made
Our children fatherless, so fatherless
Must be thy children!" * And Amen knoll'd back,
As a plague-visited Metropolis
Mourning the wide and general funeral, tolls
From all her towers and spires the bell of death.
"Thy children fatherless! not so—not so"—
Rose with a shriek that Woman by the grave.

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* But when this Hengist in processe of time thirsted after the whole kingdom of the South, he was banished, and yet afterward being restored, he conspired with the Scots against Aur. Ambrose, the son of Constantine, the just inheritor of this whole dominion. But his untruth and theirs were both recompensed together, *for he was taken prisoner by Eldulph de Samor*, a noble man of Britain, and his head for his traitories stricken off, at the commandement of Aurel. Ambrose.—Wm. Harrison. Description of Britain prefixed to Holinshed. A marginal note adds, "Some think the Seimors to come from this man by lineal descent, and I suppose no lesse." I know not whether this noble family will own my hero for their ancestor.

The Welsh tradition not merely bears out the fact of the execution of Hengist by Edol, or Eldol (Samor), but gives these words of Scripture, relating to the death of Agag, as used on the occasion.—Robert's Translation of the Brut of Tysilio.

And she sprang forth, as from beneath the earth,
As a partaker of, no mourner near
That kingly coffin. Veil fell off, and band
Started, through her bright tresses her pale face
Glitter'd, like purest ivory chas'd in gold.
Between the Criminal and Judge her stand
Rowena took; him as she saw and knew
Flush'd a sick rapture o'er her face and neck,
A fading rose-hue, like eve's parting light
On a snow bank; but from her marble brow
She the bright-clustering hair wip'd back, and thus,
"Samor, the last time thou this brow beheld'st
'Twas lucid with the moonlight, since that hour
The water hath flow'd o'er it, holy sign
Hath there been left by Christian hand, and I
Have learn'd thy creed, and one word breathes it all,
Mercy."—"But Justice is God's attribute,
Lady, as well as Mercy, Man on earth
Of both must be Vicegerent, lest the Power
Of over-ramping Evil trample down
The prostrate world. The doom hath been pronounc'd,
The doom must be."—"Ha! Man with heart of clay,
To answer with that cold and stedfast mien;
Oh, I'll go back and sue the dead again,
There's more forgiveness in the cold deaf corpse,
Than the relentless living. From that vault
I felt sweet reconcilement stealing up,
And peace came lulling to my inmost soul

I ask not for myself, not for myself,
The ice of death is round my heart, there long
I've felt the mortal anguish prey, I feel
The trembling ebb of my departing life.
That hoary head, though granted to my prayers,
Shall never rest upon my failing knee,
The father that ye give me back, (I feel
Ye give him, thou that bear'st the Avenger's name,
I know thee by a milder character)
That father cannot long be mine; his hands
May lay me in the grave, his eyes may weep,
For they can weep, although ye think it not;
Those hands ye deem for ever blood-embrued,
I've felt them fondling with my golden hair,
When with gay childish foot I danc'd to meet
His far resounding horn. That horn shall sound,
But on my deaf and earth-clos'd ears no more,
No more."—"Rowena, when a Nation speaks,
The irrevocable sentence cannot change."

Then up her fair round arm she rais'd, and wrapt,
Like a rich mantle round her, her old pride;
As the poetic Juno on the clouds
Walking in her majestic ire, while slow
Before her th' azure-breasted peacocks draw
Her chariot. "Tell me, thou that sitt'st elate,
And ye, who call yourselves this British realm,
By what new right ye judge a German King,
Where are your charters, where your scrolls of law,

Whose bright and blazon'd titles give ye power
To pass a doom on crowned head? Down, down,
Ye bold Usurpers of the Judgment seat,
Insolent doomers of a sacred life,
Inviolable by your impious breath."
"Lady, we judge by the adamantine law,
That lives within the eternal soul of man,
That God-enacted charter, 'Blood for blood.'"
Exhausted she sank down upon her knees,
Her knees that fainted under her. "Nor can,
Nor will ye shew unto a woman's eyes
That bloody consummation, not to mine.
Oh, thou that speakest in that sternest tone
Implacable, the last time thou and I
Discours'd, thy voice was broken, tender, soft,
Remember'st thou? 'twas then as if it caught
The trembling of the moonlight, that lay round
With rapturous disquiet bathing us.
Remember'st thou?" Almost the Judgment sword
Fell from the Avenger's failing hand, but firm
He grasp'd it, and with eyes to heaven upturn'd,
"Oh, duty, duty, why art thou so stern?"
Then "Lady, lo, the headsman with his steel;
To that dark Priest 'tis given to sacrifice
The victim of to-day—depart! depart!"
Stately as lily on a sunshine bank,
While drops from its curl'd leaves the o'ercharging dew,
Freshens and strengthens its bow'd stem; so white

So brightening to a momentary pride,
A trembling majesty, Rowena sate.
Fierce Hengist's dropping lip and knitted brow
Seem'd but to mock her fate-opposing prayer,
And that was all. But she—"Proud-hearted Men,
Ye vainly deem your privilege, your right,
Prerogative of your high-minded race,
The glory of endurance, and the state
Of strong resolving fortitude. Here I,
A woman born to melt and faint and fail,
A frail, a delicate, dying woman, sit
To shame you." She endur'd the flashing stroke
Of th' axe athwart her eyesight, and the blood
That sprung around her she endur'd: still kept
The lily its unbending stateliness,
And its unfading beauty sparkled still,
But all its odours were exhal'd—the breath
Of life, the tremulous motion was at rest;
A flower of marble on a temple wall,
'Twas fair but lived not, glitter'd but was cold;
While from the headless corpse t' its great account
Went fiercely forth the Pagan's haughty soul.

THE

BELVIDERE APOLLO:*

A Prize Poem,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXII.

HEARD ye the arrow hurtle in the sky?
Heard ye the dragon monster's deathful cry?
In settled majesty of calm disdain,
Proud of his might, yet scornful of the slain,
The heav'nly Archer stands †—no human birth,
No perishable denizen of earth;
Youth blooms immortal in his beardless face,
A God in strength, with more than godlike grace;
All, all divine—no struggling muscle glows,
Through heaving vein no mantling life-blood flows,

* It is right to observe that this Prize Poem was published many years before the 4th Canto of Childe Harold, in which occur the fine lines on the same subject.

† The Apollo is in the act of watching the arrow with which he slew the serpent Python.

But animate with deity alone,
In deathless glory lives the breathing stone.

Bright kindling with a conqueror's stern delight,
His keen eye tracks the arrow's fateful flight;
Burns his indignant cheek with vengeful fire,
And his lip quivers with insulting ire:
Firm fix'd his tread, yet light, as when on high
He walks th' impalpable and pathless sky:
The rich luxuriance of his hair, confined
In graceful ringlets, wantons on the wind,
That lifts in sport his mantle's drooping fold,
Proud to display that form of faultless mould.

Mighty Ephesian! * with an eagle's flight
Thy proud soul mounted through the fields of light,
View'd the bright conclave of Heav'n's blest abode,
And the cold marble leapt to life a God:
Contagious awe through breathless myriads ran,
And nations bow'd before the work of man.
For mild he seem'd, as in Elysian bowers,
Wasting in careless ease the joyous hours;
Haughty, as bards have sung, with princely sway
Curbing the fierce flame-breathing steeds of day;
Beauteous as vision seen in dreamy sleep
By holy maid on Delphi's haunted steep,

* Agasias of Ephesus. I assigned the statue to Agasias of Ephesus on the authority, if I remember right, of the French Encyclopedie, not having, at that time, the opportunity of consulting better authorities.

Mid the dim twilight of the laurel grove,
Too fair to worship, too divine to love.

Yet on that form in wild delirious trance
With more than rev'rence gazed the Maid of France.
Day after day the love-sick dreamer stood
With him alone, nor thought it solitude;
To cherish grief, her last, her dearest care,
Her one fond hope—to perish of despair.
Oft as the shifting light her sight beguiled,
Blushing she shrunk, and thought the marble smiled:
Oft breathless list'ning heard, or seem'd to hear,
A voice of music melt upon her ear.
Slowly she waned, and cold and senseless grown,
Closed her dim eyes, herself benumb'd to stone.
Yet love in death a sickly strength supplied.
Once more she gazed, then feebly smiled and died.

Note.—The foregoing fact is related in the work of Mons. Pinel sur l'Insanité.

ALEXANDER TUMULUM ACHILLIS INVISENS,

Poema,

CANCELLARII PRÆMIO DONATUM, ET IN THEATRO SHELDONIANO RECITATUM DIE JUN. XXXmo. A.D. 1813.

Jam puer Emathius Thebarum nigra favillâ
Mœnia, Cadmeamque arcem, jam Palladis urbem
Immemorem famæ, pronamque in jussa tyranni
Fregerat; at victas gentes partosque triumphos
Spernit atrox animi, et pacem fastidit inertem.
Europes angusta pati confinia nescit
Mentito soboles Jove non indigna, novumque
Poscit in arma orbem; jam transilit Hellespontum,
Purpureique Asiæ proceres, atque agmina regum,
Sceptrigeri quotquot stipant Babylonia Medi
Atria, Grajugenûm horrescunt nota arma virorum,
Myrmidonumque graves, fatalia tela, sarissas,
Confertos clypeos, inconcussamque phalangen.

At simul ac Phrygiæ campos, Priameia regna,
Conspicit, et Graiæ latè loca conscia famæ
Gramineosque ducum tumulos, subit undique Achivum

Gloria, et adversis bellantia numina in armis,
Et Lacedæmoniâ sævæ pro conjuge clades.
Omne igitur lustrare juvat, quod mente dolores
Iliacos renovet, Danaumque resuscitet iras.
Spumeus hìc Xanthus nemorosâ pronus ab Idâ,
Non galeas, non scuta virûm, sed proruta saxa
Arboreosque rapit violento flumine truncos.
Hìc, ubi luxuriat flaventi campus aristâ,
Laomedonteum fuit Ilion, undique nullæ
Reliquiæ apparent muri, fractæve columnæ,
Oblita non musco viridanti saxa, Pelasgi
Usque adeo miseras Trojæ invidere ruinas.
Rhæteasque procul rupes, tumulumque capacem
Ajacis, vastâ elatum super æquora mole,
Cernere erat—sed nulla quies—sed fervidus Heros
Stare loco nescit, flagratque cupidine pugnæ.
Devenit at tandem, Sigeo ubi littore collis
Eminet apricus, quem suaveolentia circum
Serpylla, et viridi cingunt dumeta coronâ.
Hunc et Abydenus seu mollem navita Lesbon,
Pampineamve Chion, Samiæve altaria Divæ
Invisit, radiante orientis lumine solis
Prospicit ardentem, remoque acclinis, Homeri
Suave aliquod carmen secum meditatur, et hæret
Ingentem tumulum, et Manes veneratus Achillis.

Qualis Mæonii divino in carmine vatis
Stat torvus vultu, et cœlestibus horret in armis,

Fulmineosque agitat currus sublimis, et unum
Hectora, per trepidas unum petit Hectora turmas:
Haud aliter cæcâ Æacides tellure videtur,
Ceu lituo fremituque armorum excitus amato,
Tollere se, juvenique ingens gratarier umbra.
Hunc videt, et viso gaudet, quin totus inani
Figitur in specie, quamque ipse effinxerat umbram
Esse putat veram, mutoque immobilis ore
Stat Macedo; ast Asiæ fines atque ultimus orbis
Sentit Alexandri requiem, tardataque fata.

Tum lecti comites instaurant sacra, et odori
Rite coronatis fumant altaribus ignes.
Fervet opus, latices pars vivo e fonte, Lyæo
Immistos roseo, sinceraque flumina lactis
Auratis libant pateris, pars florea circum
Serta, et odoriferos dispergunt veris honores.
Quin et gramineam niveus mactatur ad aram
Taurus, et humectat sacratam sanguine arenam.

At procul Idæo spectat de vertice pompam
Turba Phrygum, mistaque irâ et formidine mussat,
Hos novus angit honos, et adhuc invisus Achilles.
Atque aliqua in trepidâ mater stat mœsta catervâ
Andromachen animo reputans, Ithacique cruentâ
Astyanacta manu dejectum mœnibus altis,
Dilectumque premit pavefacta ad pectora natum.
Stat virgo, mœstosque fovet sub corde timores,

Ne nova materno direpta Polyxena collo
Placet Achilleos infando sanguine Manes.

At Rex Emathius nodosæ innititur hastæ
Majestate minax tacitâ, ceu numine plenus
Fatidico vates, e pectore protinus amens
Excutit ille Deum, pulcher furor occupat ora,
Terror inest oculis, procerior emicat ingens
Forma viri, fluitant agitatæ in casside cristæ.

" Me quoque, me," clamat, " belli post mille labores,
Post fractas urbes, post regna hâc proruta dextrâ
Ultima cantabit tellus, gens nulla silebit
Nomen Alexandri, sobolemque fatebitur Hammon.
Te, magne Æacida, decimus te viderit annus
Iliacas arces et debita Pergama fatis
Oppugnantem armis, me Sol mirabitur ire
Victorem, cursuque suos prævertere currus.
Jam Susa, et præclara auro niveoque elephanto
Ecbatana, et frustra patriorum ope freta Deorum
Persepolis (tristes inhiant ceu nubibus atris
Agricolæ, dubii quos fulmine proterat agros
Jupiter) expectant ruiturum in mœnia Martem;
Servitium quibus una salus, quibus ultima et una est
Gloria Alexandri dextrâ meruisse ruinam.
Adsum ego, jam Babylon æratas pandere portas
Festinat, patiturque superbo flumine pontem
Euphrates, Graiûmque minax strepit ungula equorum,

Et Larisseus super ardua mœnia currus;
Quo ferus Hystaspes, quo tramite Cyrus adegit
Quadrijugos, Lydoque equitavit fulgidus auro,
Et non fœmineis animosa Semiramis armis.
Deinde coloratos, qualis Jovis ales, ad Indos,
Et matutinæ rosea incunabula lucis,
Deferor, auriferos Macedo bibit impiger amnes.
Atque ubi Pellæis tellus jam deficit armis,
Nec superest nostro gens non indigna triumpho,
Unus Alexander victo dominabitur orbi.

" Jamque procul Martis strepitus, jam pervenit aures
Ferrea vox belli, jam dira ad prœlia Medus
Aureus accingit galeam gladiumque coruscat
Impatiens fati, et Graiæ vim provocat ultro
Cuspidis, ardentique superbit barbarus ostro.
Non æquas, Darie, malo petis omine pugnas!
Ibat ovans ferrum Argolicis flammasque carinis
Insanâ virtute ferens Priameius Hector.
Illum ergo Iliacæ rediturum vespere sero
Speravere nurus, Pelidæ cæde madentem
Atque Agamemnonios agitantem ad Pergama currus.
Speravere diu—crines procul ille venustos
Formosumque caput fœdabat pulvere in atro
Sordidus, Argivisque dabat ludibria nautis.

" Tartareas fauces reserabit et horrida claustra
Rex Erebi, utque meam videat coram invidus hastam,

Myrmidonumque feros referentia bella parentes,
Ad superas ingentem auras emittit Achillem.
Ille mihi pugnas inter, fremitumque, furoremque
Addit se comitem, et curru famulatur ovanti.
Vidi egomet, nisi vana oculos illusit imago,
Spicula crispantem, atque minaci cassida fronte
Nutantem, quæ luce vagos tremefecit ahenâ
Priamidas, nigrumque auratis Memnona bigis.
Vidi egomet, neque vana fides! atroque sub Orco
Immortalem animam tangit laus sera nepotum,
Famaque Tartareis sonat haud ingrata sub umbris.
Felix Æacida! tacitas inglorius îsses
Ad sedes Erebi, cæcâque oblivia nocte
Invida pressissent nomen, quod barbarus Istri
Potor, et Herculeis gens si qua admota columnis
Novit, et Æthiopes non æquo Sole calentes.
At tibi Mæonides, seu quis Deus, aurea Olympi
Regna procul linquens, cæci senis induit ora,
Et plusquam mortale melos, bellumque, tumultumque
Infremuit, divina tuæ præconia laudis,
Æternumque dedit viridem frondescere famam.

" Et nobis quandoque dabunt hæc ultima dona
Dii, quibus Emathium decus et mea gloria curæ.
Exoriare aliquis, nostrum qui nomen, Homerus,
Pellæosque feras ad sæcula sera triumphos,
Exoriare, novus plectro non deerit Achilles!"—

Hæc fatus, clypeo fremuit, dirosque dedere
Æra sonos, quassisque armis exercitus omnis
Intonuere, simul nemorosa remugiit Ida.
Quos sonitus, Granice, tuum ad fatale fluentum,
Persarumque acies, et pictis Medus in armis,
Agnovere procul, solio Darius eburno
Exsiluit, fatique pavens præsagia iniqui
Non audituro fudit vota irrita cœlo.

JUDICIUM REGALE,*

AN ODE.

I SLEPT, and as in solemn judgment court,
Amid a tall imperial city, sate
The sceptred of the world: their regal port
Show'd lords of earth; and as on empire's fate
They communed, grave each brow, and front serene;
Holy and high their royalty of mien;
Seem'd nor pale passion, nor blind interest base,
Within that kingly Sanhedrin had place.

Abroad were sounds as of a storm gone past,
Or midnight on a dismal battle field;
Aye some drear trumpet spake its lonely blast,
Aye in deep distance sad artillery peal'd,
Booming their sullen thunders—then ensued
The majesty of silence—on her throne
Of plain or mountain, listening sate and lone
Each nation to those crowned Peers' decree;
And this wide world of restless beings rude
Lay mute and breathless as a summer sea.

* This Poem was written after the fall of Buonaparte, and previous to the visit of the Allied Sovereigns to this country.

To the Universal Judge, that conclave proud
Their diadem-starr'd foreheads lowly bow'd;
When, at some viewless summoner's stern call,
Uprose in place the Imperial Criminal.

In that wan face nor ancient majesty
Left wither'd splendor dim, nor old renown
Lofty disdain in that sad sunken eye;
No giant ruin even in wreck elate
Frowning dominion o'er imperious fate,
But one to native lowliness cast down.
A sullen, careless desperation gave
The hollow semblance of intrepid grief,
Not that heroic patience nobly brave,
That even from misery wrings a proud relief;
Nor the dark pride of haughty spirits of ill,
That from the towering grandeur of their sin,
Wear on the brow triumphant gladness still,
Heedless of racking agony within;
Nor penitence was there, nor pale remorse,
Nor memory of his fall from kingly state,
And warrior glory in his sun-like course,
Fortune his slave, and Victory his mate.
'Twere doubt if that dark form could truly feel,
Or were indeed a shape and soul of steel.

With that from North and South an ireful train
Came forth that mighty culprit to arraign.

The first was as a savage Horseman bold,*
Uncouth his rude attire, his bearing wild;
But gallant was his brow that lightly smiled,
As seeming war some merry sport to hold:
The air whereon his fleet steed seem'd to prance
Flamed with the steely bickering of his lance.
And on the waves of his broad banner's fold
An old barbaric Capital he bore,†
Like some tall grove of pinnacle and spire,
Or snowy white, or gleaming rich with gold:
But the red havoc of upspringing fire
A fatal flood of glory seem'd to pour;
And still from gilded roof or dome upbroke
In dusky pillars huge the cloudy smoke.
Nor word that Horseman spake, but as he came
Waved his grim standard like a pall of flame.

And next came one all trim in fearful grace
And tall majestic symmetry of war,
Musket and bayonet flashing bright and far;
Deliberate valour in his slow firm pace,
And scorn of death—him at the portal arch
Saluted blithe old Frederick's bugle march.
Heavy his charge—of lordly King bow'd down
In his own royal city to the frown
Of the base minion to a despot's hate—‡

* The Cossack. † Moscow.

‡ Alluding to a governor being set over the King of Prussia in Berlin.

Then blanch'd the Soldier's bronzed and furrow'd cheek,
While of coarse taunting outrage he 'gan speak,
To her the beautiful, the delicate,
The queenly, but too gentle for a Queen—
But in sweet pride upon that insult keen
She smiled—then drooping mute, though broken hearted,
To the cold comfort of the grave departed.

The next like some old Baron's lordly son
Bore what a rich imperial crown had been,
But from its stars the pride of light was gone;
The joy of vengeance on that warrior's mien
Was chasing the red hues of ancient shame:
Not of Marengo's fair-fought field he told,
Nor the wide waves of blood huge Danube roll'd;
But him that in strong Ulm play'd that foul game,
Bartering his country and his soul for gold:
And that fair royal Maid, by battle won
Like thing that hath nor will nor sense, and borne
A bright and beauteous trophy to adorn
The brittle grandeur of an upstart's throne.

Next came a stately Lady, once was she
Queen of the Nations: of her despot sway
Earth boasted, every flood and every sea
Water'd her tributary realms, and day
Rose only on her empire: now it seem'd
That she had cast her cumbrous crown away
To slumber in her vales that basking lie
In the luxurious azure of her sky;

On Saint or Virgin, such as Raphael dream'd,
In almost blameless fond idolatry,
Speechless to gaze, and bow the adoring knee;
In the soul's secret chambers to prolong
The rapturous ravishment of harp and song.
Music was in her steps, and all her eye
Was dark and eloquent with ecstasy.

Rapine her charge—of Florence' princely halls,
And that fall'n Empress by old Tiber's side
Reft of the sole sad relics of her pride;
For the iron conqueror ravish'd from her walls
Those shapes that in their breathing colours warm
In tall arcade or saintly chapel lived,
And all wherein the soul of Greece survived
The more than human of each marble form.

Of the proud bridegroom of the Adrian Sea,
Once like his bride magnificent and free,
Sunk to a bond-slave's desperate apathy.

And him the Holiest deem'd, the chosen of God,
Beneath an earthly lord bow'd down to kiss the rod.

And next came one, the bravery of whose front
Crested hereditary pride; his arms
Were dark and dinted by rude battle's brunt:*
Of Sovereign young he spake, by wizard charms

* Spain.

Of hollow smiling treachery from the throne
Of two fair worlds to felon durance lured,
A King in narrow prison walls immured;
And some rude islander's soul-groveling son
Set up to be a princely nation's Lord:—
But then the Spaniard with fierce brow and bright
Brandish'd the cloudy flaming of his sword;
Full was his soul of Zaragoza's fight,
And the high Pyrenean snows o'erleap'd,
And other Pavias with Frank carnage heap'd.

The brother of his wrongs and of his wrath*
Was with him in the triumph of his path.
He of his exile Prince 'gan loudly boast;
To be a sceptred slave, a pageant King,
He scorn'd, and on his fleet bark's gallant wing
For kingly freedom the wild ocean crost.

Whom saw I then in port and pride a Queen,
Come walking o'er her own obsequious sea?
I knew thee well, the valiant, rich, and free!—
As when old Rome, her Roman virtue tame,
Gazed, when in arms that bold Dictator came;
With the iron ransom of her Capitol
Startled to flight the fierce insulting Gaul—
Camillus of mankind! thy regal mien

* Portugal.

Gladdened all earth; the nations from their rest
Joyful upleaped: with modest front elate,
Like one that hath proud conscience in her breast,
Thou brakest the blank silence—"Woe and hate
To this bad man for those my good and great,
That sleep amid the Spaniard's mountains rude
In the sad beauty of the hero's fate.
To this bad man immortal gratitude,
For he hath taught, who slaves the free of earth
Fettereth the whirlwind: hath given glorious birth
To deeds that dwarf my old majestic fame,
Make BLAKE and MARLBOROUGH languid sound and tame
To NELSON and that Chief to whom defeat
Is like an undiscovered star—hath shown
More than the Macedonian victories vain
To rivet on the earth the Oppressor's chain:
As little will yon Sun's empyrean throne
Endure a mortal seat, as this wide globe
Be one man's appanage; or my fair isle,
That precious gem in ocean's azure robe,
Cast Freedom's banner down, by force or guile
Mastered, and forfeit earth's renown and love,
And her bright visions of high meed above."

Then all at once did from all earth arise
Fierce imprecations on that man of sin;
And all the loaded winds came heavy in
With exultations and with agonies.

From the lone coldness of the widow's bed,
The feverish pillow of the orphan's head,
From dying men earth's woful valleys heaping,
From smouldering cities in their ashes sleeping,
Like the hoarse tumbling of a torrent flood
Mingled the dismal concord—"Blood for blood."

But then arose a faded shape and pale,
Once had she been a peerless princely dame; *
Downcast her grace of grief; she seemed to veil
The mournful beauty of her face for shame.
And is this she whose sprightly laughing mirth
Was like the blithe spring on the festal earth;
Aye dancing at the moonlight close of day,
'Mid purple vineyards, graceful, light, and gay;
Or in high pomp and gallant pride of port
Holding rich revel in her gorgeous court?—

Abrupt her speech and wild—"When I 'gan wake
From that my sleep of madness, all around
Of human blood a broad and livid lake
Was in my splendid cities; mound on mound
Rose peopled with my noble princely dead:
And o'er them the fell anarch, Murther, stood
Grimly reposing in his weary mood—
I turned, all trembling turned, my guilty head:
There humankind had leagued their arms of dread

* France.

'Gainst the Blasphemer of fair Freedom's name,
Heaven gave no hope, for heaven I dared disclaim.
High in the flaming car of victory riding,
From Alp to Alp his chamois warriors guiding,
The peril of wild Lodi's arch bestriding,
I saw yon Chieftain in his morn of fame;
Cities and armies at his beck sank down,
And in the gaudy colours of renown
The fabling Orient vested his young name.
The bright and baleful Meteor I adored,
Low bow'd I down, and said—'Be thou my Lord!'

Like old and ruinous towers, the ancient thrones
Crumbled, and dynasties of elder time;
The banners of my conquest-plumed sons
Flouted the winds of many a distant clime:
On necks of vanquish'd kings I fix'd my seat,
And the broad Rhine roll'd vassal at my feet.

Thrice did the indignant Nations league their might,
Thrice the red darkness of the battle night
Folded the recreant terror of their flight.
Realms sack'd and ravaged empires sooth'd my toils,
And Satrap Chiefs were Monarchs from my spoils.

In solitude of freedom that rich Queen
Sate in her sanctity of waves serene.

From cliff and beach, dominion in their motion,
I saw her stately navies' broad array,
Like jealous lords at watch, that none but they
Adulterate with their fair majestic ocean.
And cries I heard like frenzy and dismay
Of NELSON, NELSON deepening on their way.
But what to me though red the western deep
With other fires than of the setting sun?
And what to me though round Trafalgar's steep
My haughty pennon'd galleys, one by one,
Come rolling their huge wrecks on the waves' sweep?
Go rule thy brawling and tumultuous sea,
Briton, but leave the servile earth to me.
And what to me though in my dungeons deep
By this new Charlemagne dark deeds were done—
Will the stones start and babble to the sun
How that bold Briton Wright, and Pichegru sleep?

At noon of night I heard the drum of death,*
Like evil spirits on the blasted heath
By the drear torchlight iron men were met.
The mockery of justice soon was pass'd;
Again the drum its dismal warning beat:
Then flashing muskets deathful lustre cast
A moment on the victim; he sedate
In calm disdain of even a felon's fate

* The Death of D'Enghien.

His royal breast bared to the soldiers' mark,
Seeming to pity with his steady sight
Those poor mechanic murderers—then 'twas dark,
All but yon crown'd Assassin's visage bright,
Who waved his torch in horrible delight.
O blood of Condé! could thy spirit rest
In thy tame country's cold ungrateful breast?
Yet in my drunkenness of pride I mock'd
Mean crimes that would a petty tyrant shame,
For still in glory's cradle was I rock'd,
Mine eagle eyrie crown'd the steep of fame.
Nought heeded I, that the proud son of Spain,
Like a fierce courser that has burst his chain,
Shook the base slavery from his floating mane.
And that new British Arthur's virgin shield
Won its rich blazon on Vimeira's field.

For lo, my cities throw their portals wide;
Gorgeous my festal streets, as when of old
The monarchs met upon the Plain of Gold—
Lo, on my throne a bright and royal bride!

Vain all my pomp, imperial beauty vain
The reveller in battles to restrain.
And at his word, as at the fabled wand
Of old magician, from the teeming land,
Myriad on myriad, harness'd warriors rise;
The earth was darkened with excess of light,
Line after line, insufferably bright;

The black artillery, in their cloudy might,
Impious defiance launched against the skies.
With tamer sounds did that wild Heathen * vaunt
Amid his thunderous heavens high Jove to daunt.
Day after day I saw their pomp depart;
Then said the haughty frenzy of my heart,
When o'er this world thy victor wheels are driven,
Wilt thou go vanquish the bright stars of Heaven?

And lo, the rival nations hurrying
To crowd beneath my passing eagle's wing;
Lo, 'mong my captains many a sceptred king.

Now, now the Northern skies are all on fire
As with some mighty Empire's funeral pyre!
Why bring they not proud Catherine's trophies home?
I hear the sound of wheels—'They come, they come.'

A solitary sound—no pomp of war,
One dastard pale accomplice of his flight,
He comes, whom earth, and all earth's sons obey,
The peerless and the paragon of might;
The pinnace of the Persian runaway
Was glory to his lone and hurrying car.

I ask'd for those in fight, in triumph tried,
The partners of his peril and his pride.
He, in a tyrant's mockery of my woe,
Bade me go seek them in the Scythian snow.

* Salmoneus.

Then felt I what a pitiful tame slave
Was I, who vaunted me mankind's sole queen,
The satellite of one man's wayward spleen—
The remnant of my fair, my young, my brave,
Were rent once more to forge the adamant chain
Burst by the nations, who with one accord
Shook the bright vengeance of the freeman's sword—
Another year—and the broad Rhine again
Shrouded the sceptred fugitive's pale train,
Then turned a rebel, rolled her free waves to the main.

And now the banners of the embattled world
Their folds of vengeance on my vales unfurled.
Oh, bloody was the evening of thine ire,
Thou gorgeous comet of disastrous fire!

I wont to see, as from some quiet star,
Deluging slaughter this fair earth o'erwhelm,
On the rich bosom of my sunny realm
Gave quarry to the ravening dogs of war.

But mercy shone upon the merciless!
Strong but to save and valiant but to bless,
No ruthless Cæsars clad in blood and flame,
Royal in virtue the Avengers came.
Those whom I spoiled, no spoilers came to me,
I said, 'Be slave, O earth!' but they—'O France, be free.'

For yon dark Chief of woe, and guilt, and strife,
O sceptred Judges! punish him with life.
Fear not he seek with the old Roman pride,
That weakness to the noble soul allied,
To die as Cato, and as Brutus died.

Fear not that in his abject heart he show
That martyr fortitude, that smiles in woe.
By him shall that great secret be betrayed,
Of what poor stuff are earth's dread tyrants made.
Oh, let him live to be despised, to see
France happy, and the glorious nations free;
Death were delight to that deep misery!"—

Then did that kingly conclave, with one voice,
Pass the dread sentence on the gloomy man;
In his soul's icy deadness he alone
By others' woes seemed hardened to his own.
From land to land the penal tidings ran;
Earth lifted up her rich face to rejoice,
The bright blue heavens bade wintry warring cease,
And spring came dancing o'er a world at peace.

FORTUNE.

(FROM THE ITALIAN OF GUIDI.)

A Lady, like to Juno in her state,
Upon the air her golden tresses streaming,
And with celestial eyes of azure beaming,
Entered whilere my gate.
Like a Barbaric Queen
On the Euphrates' shore,
In purple and fine linen was she pall'd,
Nor flower nor laurel green,
Her tresses for their garland wore
The splendour of the Indian emerald.
But through the rigid pride and pomp unbending
Of beauty and of haughtiness,
Sparkled a flattery sweet and condescending;
And from her inmost bosom sent,
Came accents of most wonderous gentleness,
Officious and intent
To thrall my soul in soft imprisonment.

And, "place," she said, "thy hand within my hair,
And all around thou'lt see
Delightful chances fair
On golden feet come dancing unto thee.

Me Jove's daughter shalt thou own,
That with my sister Fate
Sits by his side in state
On the eternal throne.
Great Neptune to my will the ocean gives;
In vain, in well appointed strength secure,
The Indian and the Briton strives
The assaulting billows to endure;
Unless their flying sails I guide
Where over the smooth tide
On my sweet spirit's wings I ride.
I banish to their bound
The storms of dismal sound,
And o'er them take my stand with foot serene;
The Æolian caverns under
The wings of the rude winds I chain,
And with my hand I burst asunder
The fiery chariot wheels of the hurricane:
And in its fount the horrid restless fire
I quench, ere it aspire
To Heaven to colour the red Comet's train.

This is the hand that forged on Ganges' shore
The Indians' empire; by Orontes set
The royal tiar the Assyrian wore;
Hung jewels on the brow of Babylon,
By Tigris wreath'd the Persian's coronet,
And at the Macedonian's foot bow'd every throne.

It was my lavish gift,
The triumph and the song
Around the youth of Pella loud uplift,
When he through Asia swept along,
A torrent swift and strong;
With me, with me the Conqueror ran
To where the Sun his golden course began;
And the high Monarch left on earth
A faith unquestion'd of his heavenly birth;
By valour mingled with the Gods above,
And made a glory of himself to his great Father Jove.

My royal spirits oft
Their solemn mystic round
On Rome's great birth-day wound:
And I the haughty Eagles sprung aloft
Unto the Star of Mars upborne,
Till, poising on their plumy sails,
They 'gan their native vales
And Sabine palms to scorn:
And I on the seven hills to sway
That Senate House of Kings convened,
On me their guide and stay
Ever the Roman councils lean'd
In danger's lofty way.
I guerdoned the wise delay
Of Fabius with the laurel crown,
And hot Marcellus' fiercer battle tone;

And I on the Tarpeian did deliver
  Afric a captive, and through me Nile flow'd
Under the laws of the great Latin river;
And of his bow and quiver
The Parthian rear'd a trophy high and broad:
The Dacian's fierce inroad
Against the gates of iron broke,
Taurus and Caucasus endured my yoke:
Then my vassal and my slave
  Did every native land of every wind become,
  And when I had o'ercome
All earth beneath my feet, I gave
  The vanquished world in one great gift to Rome.

I know that in thine high imagination,
  Other daughters of Great Jove
Have taken their Imperial station,
  And queen-like thy submissive passions move;
From them thou hop'st a high and god-like fate,
  From them thy haughty verse presages
  An everlasting sway o'er distant ages,
  And with their glorious rages
Thy mind intoxicate,
Deems 'tis in triumphal motion,
  On courser fleet, or winged bark,
Over earth and over ocean;
  While in shepherd hamlet dark

Thou liv'st, with want within, and raiment coarse without;
And none upon thy state hath thrown
Gentle regard; I, I alone
To new and lofty venture call thee out;
Then follow, thus besought,
Waste not thy soul in thought;
Brooks nor sloth nor lingering
The great moment on the wing.

"A blissful lady and immortal, born
From the eternal mind of Deity,
(I answer'd, bold and free,)
My soul hath in her queenly care;
She mine imagination doth upbear,
And steeps it in the light of her rich morn,
That overshades and sicklies all thy shining;
And though my lowly hair
Presume not to bright crowns of thy entwining,
Yet in my mind I bear
Gifts nobler and more rare
Than the kingdoms thou canst lavish,
Gifts thou canst nor give nor ravish:
And though my spirit may not comprehend
Thy chances bright and fair,
Yet neither doth her sight offend
The aspect pale of miserable care:
Horror to her is not
Of this coarse raiment, and this humble cot;

She with the golden Muses doth abide,
And oh! the darling children of thy pride
Shall then be truly glorified,
When they may merit to be wrapt around
With my Poesy's eternal sound."

She kindled at my words and flamed, as when
A cruel star hath wide dispread
Its locks of bloody red,
She burst in wrathful menace then:
" Me fears the Dacian, me the band
Of wandering Scythians fears,
Me the rough mothers of Barbaric kings;
In woe and dread amid the rings
Of their encircling spears
The purple tyrants stand;
And a shepherd here forlorn
Treats my proffered boons with scorn.
And fears he not my wrath?
And knows he not my works of scathe;
Nor how with angry foot I went,
Of every province in the Orient
Branding the bosom with deep tracks of death?
From three Empresses I rent
The tresses and imperial wreath,
And bar'd them to the pitiless element.
Well I remember when his armed grasp
From Asia stretch'd, rash Xerxes took his stand

Upon the formidable bridge to clasp
And manacle sad Europe's trembling hand:
In the great day of battle there was I,
Busy with myriads of the Persian slaughter,
The Salaminian sea's fair face to dye,
That yet admires its dark and bloody water;
Full vengeance wreak'd I for the affront
Done Neptune at the fetter'd Hellespont.

To the Nile then did I go,
The fatal collar wound
The fair neck of the Egyptian Queen around;
And I the merciless poison made to flow
Into her breast of snow.
Ere that within the mined cave,
I forced dark Afric's valour stoop
Confounded, and its dauntless spirit droop,
When to the Carthaginian brave,
With mine own hand, the hemlock draught I gave.

And Rome through me the ravenous flame
In the heart of her great rival, Carthage, cast,
That went through Lybia wandering, a scorn'd shade,
Till, sunk to equal shame,
Her mighty enemy at last
A shape of mockery was made:
Then miserably pleased,
Her fierce and ancient vengeance she appeased;

And even drew a sigh
  Over the ruins vast
Of the deep-hated Latin majesty.
I will not call to mind the horrid sword
  Upon the Memphian shore,
  Steep'd treasonously in great Pompey's gore;
Nor that for rigid Cato's death abhorr'd;
  Nor that which in the hand of Brutus wore
The first deep-colouring of a Cæsar's blood.
Nor will I honour thee with my high mood
Of wrath, that kingdoms doth exterminate;
Incapable art thou of my great hate,
As my great glories. Therefore shall be thine
Of my revenge a slighter sign;
Yet will I make its fearful sound
Hoarse and slow rebound,
Till seem the gentle pipings low,
To equal the fierce trumpet's brazen glow."

Then sprung she on her flight,
  Furious, and at her call,
Upon my cottage did the storms alight,
  Did hurricanes and thunders fall.
But I, with brow serene,
  Beheld the angry hail
  And lightning flashing pale,
Devour the promise green
  Of my poor native vale.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

TWO SONNETS.

I.

Love Thee!—oh, Thou, the world's eternal Sire!
Whose palace is the vast infinity,
Time, space, height, depth, oh God! are full of Thee,
And sun-eyed seraphs tremble and admire.
Love Thee;—but Thou art girt with vengeful fire,
And mountains quake, and banded nations flee,
And terror shakes the wide unfathom'd sea,
When the heavens rock with thy tempestuous ire.
Oh, Thou! too vast for thought to comprehend,
That wast ere time,—shalt be when time is o'er;
Ages and worlds begin—grow old—and end,
Systems and suns thy changeless throne before,
Commence and close their cycles:—lost, I bend
To earth my prostrate soul, and shudder and adore!

II.

Love Thee!—oh, clad in human lowliness,
—In whom each heart its mortal kindred knows—
Our flesh, our form, our tears, our pains, our woes,—
A fellow-wanderer o'er earth's wilderness!
Love Thee! whose every word but breathes to bless!
Through Thee, from long-seal'd lips glad language flows;
The blind their eyes, that laugh with light, unclose;
And babes, unchid, thy garment's hem caress.
—I see Thee, doom'd by bitterest pangs to die,
Up the sad hill, with willing footsteps, move,
With scourge, and taunt, and wanton agony,
While the cross nods, in hideous gloom, above,
Though all—even there—be radiant Deity!
—Speechless I gaze, and my whole soul is Love!

HYMNS FOR CHURCH SERVICE.

(PRINTED ORIGINALLY IN BISHOP HEBER'S COLLECTION.)

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

THE chariot! the chariot! its wheels roll on fire
As the Lord cometh down in the pomp of his ire:
Self-moving it drives on its path-way of cloud,
And the Heavens with the burthen of Godhead are bow'd.

The glory! the glory! by myriads are pour'd
The hosts of the Angels to wait on their Lord,
And the glorified saints and the martyrs are there,
And all who the palm-wreath of victory wear.

The trumpet! the trumpet! the dead have all heard:
Lo the depths of the stone-cover'd charnels are stirr'd:
From the sea, from the land, from the south and the north,
The vast generations of man are come forth.

The judgment! the judgment! the thrones are all set,
Where the Lamb and the white-vested Elders are met!
All flesh is at once in the sight of the Lord,
And the doom of eternity hangs on His word!

Oh mercy! oh mercy! look down from above,
Creator! on us thy sad children, with love!
When beneath to their darkness the wicked are driven,
May our sanctified souls find a mansion in heaven!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

LORD! Thou didst arise and say
To the troubled waters "peace,"
And the tempest died away.
Down they sank, the foamy seas;
And a calm and heaving sleep
Spread o'er all the glassy deep,
All the azure lake serene
Like another heaven was seen!

Lord! Thy gracious word repeat
To the billows of the proud!
Quell the tyrant's martial heat,
Quell the fierce and changing crowd!
Then the earth shall find répose
From its restless strife and woes;
And an imaged Heaven appear
On our world of darkness here!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE angel comes, he comes to reap
The harvest of the Lord!
O'er all the earth with fatal sweep
Wide waves his flamy sword.

And who are they, in sheaves to bide
The fire of Vengeance bound?
The tares, whose rank luxuriant pride
Choked the fair crop around.

And who are they, reserved in store
God's treasure-house to fill?
The wheat, a hundred-fold that bore
Amid surrounding ill.

O King of Mercy! grant us power
Thy fiery wrath to flee!
In thy destroying angel's hour,
O gather us to Thee!

QUINQUAGESIMA.

LORD! we sit and cry to Thee,
Like the blind beside the way:
Make our darken'd souls to see
The glory of thy perfect day!
Lord! rebuke our sullen night,
And give Thyself unto our sight!

Lord! we do not ask to gaze
On our dim and earthly sun;
But the light that still shall blaze
When every star its course hath run:
The light that gilds thy blest abode,
The glory of the Lamb of God!

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Oh help us, Lord! each hour of need
Thy Heavenly succour give;
Help us in thought, and word, and deed,
Each hour on earth we live.

Oh help us, when our spirits bleed
With contrite anguish sore,
And when our hearts are cold and dead,
Oh help us, Lord, the more.

Oh help us, through the prayer of faith
More firmly to believe;
For still the more the servant hath,
The more shall he receive.

If strangers to Thy fold we call,
Imploring at Thy feet
The crumbs that from Thy table fall,
'Tis all we dare entreat.

But be it, Lord of Mercy, all,
So Thou wilt grant but this;
The crumbs that from Thy table fall
Are light, and life, and bliss.

Oh help us, Saviour! from on high,
We know no help but Thee;
Oh! help us so to live and die
As thine in Heaven to be.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

RIDE on! ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes Hosanna cry!
Thine humble beast pursues his road,
With palms and scatter'd garments strow'd!

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die!
Oh Christ! Thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive Death and conquer'd Sin!

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
The winged squadrons of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes,
To see the approaching sacrifice!

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
The Father on His sapphire throne
Expects His own anointed Son!

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die!
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain!
Then take, oh God! Thy power, and reign!

GOOD FRIDAY.

Bound upon th' accursed tree,
Faint and bleeding, who is He?
By the eyes so pale and dim,
Streaming blood and writhing limb,
By the flesh with scourges torn,
By the crown of twisted thorn,
By the side so deeply pierced,
By the baffled burning thirst,
By the drooping death-dew'd brow,
Son of Man! 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!

Bound upon the accursed tree,
Dread and awful, who is He?
By the sun at noon-day pale,
Shivering rocks, and rending veil,
By earth that trembles at His doom,
By yonder saints who burst their tomb,
By Eden, promised ere He died
To the felon at His side,
Lord! our suppliant knees we bow,
Son of God! 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!

Bound upon th' accursed tree,
Sad and dying, who is He?
By the last and bitter cry
The ghost given up in agony;
By the lifeless body laid
In the chamber of the dead;
By the mourners come to weep
Where the bones of Jesus sleep;
Crucified! we know Thee now;
Son of Man! 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!

Bound upon th' accursed tree,
Dread and awful, who is He?
By the prayer for them that slew,
"Lord! they know not what they do!"
By the spoil'd and empty grave,
By the souls He died to save,
By the conquest He hath won,
By the saints before His throne,
By the rainbow round His brow,
Son of God! 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LORD! have mercy when we strive
To save through Thee our souls alive!
When the pamper'd flesh is strong,
When the strife is fierce and long;

When our wakening thoughts begin,
First to loathe their cherish'd sin,
And our weary spirits fail,
And our aching brows are pale,
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

Lord! have mercy when we lie
On the restless bed, and sigh,
Sigh for Death, yet fear it still,
From the thought of former ill;
When all other hope is gone;
When our course is almost done;
When the dim advancing gloom
Tells us that our hour is come,
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

Lord! have mercy when we know
First how vain this world below;
When the earliest gleam is given
Of Thy bright but distant Heaven!
When our darker thoughts oppress,
Doubts perplex and fears distress,
And our sadden'd spirits dwell
On the open gates of Hell,
Oh then have mercy! Lord!

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

When our heads are bow'd with woe,
When our bitter tears o'erflow;
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

Thou our throbbing flesh hast worn,
Thou our mortal griefs hast borne,
Thou hast shed the human tear:
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

When the sullen death-bell tolls
For our own departed souls;
When our final doom is near,
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

Thou hast bow'd the dying head;
Thou the blood of life hast shed;
Thou hast fill'd a mortal bier:
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

When the heart is sad within
With the thought of all its sin;
When the spirit shrinks with fear,
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

Thou the shame, the grief hast known,
Though the sins were not thine own,
Thou hast deign'd their load to bear,
Gracious Son of Mary, hear!

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GREAT God of Hosts! come down in thy glory!
Shake earth and heaven with thine awful tread:
Seal Thou the book of our world's dark story:
Summon to judgment the quick and the dead!

Great God of Hosts! come down to rule o'er us!
Long have we pray'd for thy peaceful reign:
Change this sad earth to an Eden before us;
Make it the mansion of bliss again!

Great God of Hosts! the dreadful, the glorious!
Come and set up thy kingly Throne:
Over the legions of Hell victorious,
Rule in the world of thy saints alone!

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

WHEN God came down from Heav'n—the living God—
What signs and wonders mark'd his stately way?
Brake out the winds in music where He trode;
Shone o'er the heav'ns a brighter, softer day.

The dumb began to speak, the blind to see,
And the lame leap'd, and pain and paleness fled;
The mourner's sunken eye grew bright with glee,
And from the tomb awoke the wondering dead!

When God went back to Heav'n—the living God—
Rode He the heavens upon a fiery car?
Waved seraph-wings along his glorious road?
Stood still to wonder each bright wandering star?

Upon the cross He hung, and bow'd the head,
And pray'd for them that smote, and them that curst;
And, drop by drop, his slow life-blood was shed,
And his last hour of suffering was his worst!

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LORD, have mercy, and remove us
Early to thy place of rest,
Where the heavens are calm above us,
And as calm each sainted breast!

Holiest, hear us! by the anguish
On the cross Thou didst endure,
Let no more our sad hearts languish
In this weary world obscure!

Gracious!—yet if our repentance
Be not perfect and sincere,
Lord, suspend thy fatal sentence,
Leave us still in sadness here!

Leave us, Saviour! till our spirit
From each earthly taint is free,
Fit thy kingdom to inherit,
Fit to take its rest with Thee!

EASTER HYMN.

CHRIST is risen! the Lord is come,
Bursting from the sealed tomb!
Death and Hell, in mute dismay,
Render up their mightier prey.

Christ is risen! but not alone!
Death, thy kingdom is o'erthrown!
We shall rise as he hath risen,
From the deep sepulchral prison.

Heirs of death, and sons of clay,
Long in death's dark thrall we lay,
And went down in trembling gloom,
To the unawakening tomb.

Heirs of life, and sons of God,
On the path our Captain trod,
Now we hope to soar on high
To the everlasting sky.

Mortal once, immortal now,
Our vile bodies off we throw,
Glorious bodies to put on,
Round our great Redeemer's throne.

Lofty hopes! and theirs indeed
Who the Christian's life shall lead;
Christ's below in faith and love,
Christ's in endless bliss above.

THE SLAVE SHIP.

[Founded on the following fact:—"The case of the *Rodeur*, mentioned by Lord Lansdowne. A dreadful ophthalmia prevailed among the slaves on board this ship, which was communicated to the crew, so that there was but a single man who could see to guide the vessel into port."—*Quart. Rev.* vol. 26, p. 71.]

"OLD, sightless man, unwont art thou,
As blind men use, at noon
To sit and sun thy tranquil brow,
And hear the bird's sweet tune.

There 's something heavy at thy heart,
Thou dost not join the pray'r;
Even at God's word thou 'lt writhe and start,"—
"Oh! man of God, beware!

"If thou didst hear what I could say,
'T would make thee doubt of grace,
And drive me from God's house away,
Lest I infect the place."

" Say on; there 's nought of human sin,
Christ's blood may not atone:"
" Thou canst not read what load 's within
This desperate heart."—" Say on."

" The skies were bright, the seas were calm,
We ran before the wind,
That, bending Afric's groves of palm,
Came fragrant from behind.

" And merry sang our crew, the cup
Was gaily drawn and quaff'd,
And when the hollow groan came up
From the dark hold, we laugh'd.

" For deep below, and all secure,
Our living freight was laid,
And long with ample gain, and sure,
We had driven our awful trade.

" They lay, like bales, in stifling gloom,
Man, woman, nursling child,
As in some plague-struck city's tomb
The loathsome dead are piled.

" At one short gust of that close air
The sickening cheek grew pale;
We turn'd away—'t was all our care—
Heaven's sweet breath to inhale.

" 'Mid howl and yell, and shuddering moan,
The scourge, the clanking chain,
The cards were dealt, the dice were thrown,
We staked our share of gain.

" Soon in smooth Martinico's coves
Our welcome bark shall moor,
Or underneath the citron-groves
That wave on Cuba's shore.

" 'T was strange, ere many days were gone,
How still grew all below,
The wailing babe was heard alone,
Or some low sob of woe.

" Into the dusky hold we gazed,
In heaps we saw them lie,
And dim, unmeaning looks were raised
From many a blood-red eye.

" And helpless hands were groping round
To catch their scanty meal;
Or at some voice's well-known sound,
Some well-known touch to feel.

" And still it spread, the blinding plague
That seals the orbs of sight;
The eyes were rolling, wild and vague;
Within was black as night.

" They dared not move, they could not weep,
They could but lie and moan;
Some, not in mercy, to the deep,
Like damaged wares, were thrown.

" We cursed the dire disease that spread,
And cross'd our golden dream;
Those godless men did quake with dread,
To hear us thus blaspheme.

" And so we drank, and drank the more,
And each man pledged his mate;
Here 's better luck, from Gambia's shore
When next we load our freight.

" Another morn, but one—the bark
Lurch'd heavy on her way—
The steersman shriek'd, ' Hell's not so dark
As this dull murky day.'

" We look'd, and red through films of blood
Glared forth his angry eye:
Another, as he mann'd the shroud,
Came toppling from on high.

" Then each alone his hammock made,
As the wild beast his lair,
Nor friend his nearest friend would aid,
In dread his doom to share.

" Yet every eve some eyes did close
Upon the sunset bright,
And when the glorious morn arose,
It bore to them no light.

" Till I, the only man, the last
Of that dark brotherhood,
To guide the helm, to rig the mast,
To tend the daily food.

" I felt it film, I felt it grow,
The dim and misty scale,
I could not see the compass now,
I could not see the sail.

" The sea was all a wavering fog,
The sun a hazy lamp,
As on some pestilential bog,
The wandering wild-fire damp.

" And there we lay, and on we drove,
Heaved up, and pitching down;
Oh! cruel grace of Him above,
That would not let us drown.

" And some began to pray for fear,
And some began to swear;
Methought it was most dread to hear
Upon such lips the prayer.

" And some would fondly speak of home,
The wife's, the infant's kiss ;
Great God! that parents e'er should come
On such a trade as this !

" And some I heard plunge down beneath,
And drown—that could not I :
Oh ! how my spirit yearn'd for death,
Yet how I fear'd to die !

" We heard the wild and frantic shriek
Of starving men below,
We heard them strive their bonds to break,
And burst the hatches how.

" We thought we heard them on the stair,
And trampling on the deck,
I almost felt their blind despair,
Wild grappling at my neck.

" Again I woke, and yet again,
With throat as dry as dust,
And famine in my heart and brain,
And,—speak it out I must,—

" A lawless, execrable thought,
That scarce could be withstood,
Before my loathing fancy brought
Unutterable food.

" No more, my brain can bear no more,—
Nor more my tongue can tell;
I know I breathed no air, but bore
A sick'ning grave-like smell.

" And all, save I alone, could die—
Thus on death's verge and brink
All thoughtless, feelingless, could lie—
I still must feel and think.

" At length, when ages had pass'd o'er,
Ages, it seem'd, of night,
There came a shock, and then a roar
Of billows in their might.

" I know not how, when next I woke,
The numb waves wrapp'd me round,
And in my loaded ears there broke
A dizzy, bubbling sound.

" Again I woke, and living men
Stood round—a Christian crew;
The first, the last, of joy was then,
That since those days I knew.

" I've been, I know, since that black tide,
Where raving madmen lay,
Above, beneath, on ev'ry side,
And I as mad as they.

"And I shall be where never dies
The worm, nor slakes the flame,
When those two hundred souls shall rise,
The Judge's wrath to claim.

"I'd rather rave in that wild room
Than see what I have seen;
I'd rather meet my final doom,
Than be—where I have been.

"Priest, I've not seen thy loathing face,
I've heard thy gasps of fear;—
Away—no word of hope or grace—
I may not—will not hear!"

THE TAKING OF TROY.

CHORUS FROM THE TROADES OF EURIPIDES.

A SAD, unwonted song,
O'er Ilion, Muse! prolong,
Mingled with tears of woe,
The funeral descant slow.

I too, with shriek and frantic cry,
Take up the dismal melody;
How, lost through that strange four-wheel'd car,
Stern Argos' captive chains we wear,
What time the Greek, or ere he fled,
Left at our gate the armed steed,
Menacing the heavens with giant height,
And all with golden housings bright.

Shouted all the people loud,
On the rock-built height that stood,—
"Come," they sang, and on they press'd,—
"Come, from all our toils released,
Lead the blest image to the shrine
Of her, the Jove-born Trojan maid divine!"

Lingered then what timorous maid?
Nor age his tardy steps delay'd;—
With gladsome shout, and jocund song,
They drew their treacherous fate along!
And all the Phrygian rout
Through every gate rushed out.
On the dangerous gift they lead,
The beauty of th' unyoked, immortal steed,
With its ambush'd warrior freight,
Argos' pride and Ilion's fate.
Round the stately horse, and round
Cord and cable soon they wound;
And drag it on, like pinnace dark
Of some tall and stately bark,
To the temple's marble floor,
Soon to swim with Trojan gore.

O'er the toil, the triumph, spread
Silent night her curtained shade;
But Lybian pipes still sweetly rang,
And many a Phrygian air they sang;
And maidens danced with airy feet,
To the jocund measures sweet.
And every house was blazing bright,
As the glowing festal light
Its rich and purple splendour streamed,
Where the mantling wine-cup gleamed.

But I, the while the palace-courts around,
Hymning the mountain queen, Jove's virgin daughter,
Went with blithe dance, and music's sprightly sound,—
When, all at once, the frantic cry of slaughter
All through the wide and startled city ran!
The shudd'ring infants on their mothers' breasts
Clung with their hands, and cowered within their vests.
Forth stalk'd the mighty Mars, and the fell work began,
The work of Pallas in her ire!—
Then round each waning altar-fire,
Wild Slaughter, drunk with Phrygian blood,
And murtherous Desolation strewed,
Where, on her couch of slumber laid,
Was wont to rest the tender maid,
To warrior Greece the crown of triumph gave,
The last full anguish to the Phrygian slave!

DEBORAH'S HYMN OF TRIUMPH.

Thus sang Deborah and Barak, son of Abinoam,
In the day of victory thus they sang:
That Israel hath wrought her mighty vengeance,
That the willing people rush'd to battle,
Oh, therefore, praise Jehovah!

Hear, ye kings! give ear, ye princes!
I to Jehovah, I will lift the song,
I will sound the harp to Jehovah, God of Israel!
Jehovah! when thou wentest forth from Seir!
When thou marchedst through the fields of Edom!
Quaked the earth, and poured the heavens,
Yea, the clouds poured down with water:
Before Jehovah's face the mountains melted,
That Sinai before Jehovah's face,
The God of Israel.

In the days of Shaîngar, son of Anath,
In Jael's days, untrodden were the highways,
Through the winding by-path stole the traveller;
Upon the plains deserted lay the hamlets,

Even till that I, till Deborah arose,
Till I arose in Israel a mother.
They chose new gods:
War was in all their gates!
Was buckler seen, or lance,
'Mong forty thousand sons of Israel?

My soul is yours, ye chiefs of Israel!
And ye, the self-devoted of the people,
Praise ye the Lord with me!
Ye that ride upon the snow-white asses;
Ye that sit to judge on rich divans!
Ye that plod on foot the open way,
Come, meditate the song.

For the noise of plundering archers by the wells of water,
Now they meet and sing aloud Jehovah's righteous acts;
His righteous acts the hamlets sing upon the open plains,
And enter their deserted gates the people of Jehovah.

Awake, Deborah! awake!
Awake, uplift the song!
Barak, awake, and lead thy captives captive,
Thou son of Abinoam!

With him a valiant few went down against the mighty,
With me Jehovah's people went down against the strong.

First Ephraim, from the Mount of Amalek,

And after thee, the bands of Benjamin!
From Machir came the rulers of the people,
From Zebulon those that bear the marshal's staff;
And Issachar's brave princes came with Deborah,
Issachar, the strength of Barak:
They burst into the valley on his footsteps.

By Reuben's fountains there was deep debating—
Why satt'st thou idle, Reuben, 'mid thy herd-stalls?
Was it to hear the lowing of thy cattle?
By Reuben's fountains there was deep debating—

And Gilead lingered on the shores of Jordan—
And Dan, why dwelled he among his ships?—
And Asser dwelled in his sea-shore havens,
And sate upon his rock precipitous.
But Zebulon was a death-defying people,
And Naphtali from off the mountain heights.

Came the kings and fought,
Fought the kings of Canaan,
By Tannach, by Megiddo's waters,
For the golden booty that they won not.

From the heavens they fought 'gainst Sisera,
In their courses fought the stars against him:
The torrent Kishon swept them down,
That ancient river Kishon.
So trample thou, my soul, upon their might.

Then stamp'd the clattering hoofs of prancing horses
At the flight, at the flight of the mighty.

Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord,
Curse, a twofold curse upon her dastard sons:
For they came not to the succour of Jehovah,
To the succour of Jehovah 'gainst the mighty.

Above all women blest be Jael,
Heber the Kenite's wife,
O'er all the women blest, that dwell in tents.

Water he ask'd—she gave him milk,
The curded milk, in her costliest bowl.

Her left hand to the nail she set,
Her right hand to the workman's hammer—
Then Sisera she smote—she clave his head;
She bruised—she pierced his temples.
At her feet he bow'd; he fell; he lay;
At her feet he bow'd; he fell;
Where he bow'd, there he fell dead.

From the window she look'd forth, she cried,
The mother of Sisera, through the lattice:
"Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"
Her prudent women answer'd her—

Yea, she herself gave answer to herself—
" Have they not seized, not shared the spoil ?
One damsel, or two damsels to each chief ?
To Sisera a many-coloured robe,
A many-coloured robe, and richly broider'd,
Many-colour'd, and broider'd round the neck."

Thus perish all thine enemies, Jehovah ;
And those who love thee, like the sun, shine forth,
The sun in all its glory*.

* In the above translation an attempt is made to preserve something like a rhythmical flow. It adheres to the original language, excepting where an occasional word is, but rarely, inserted, for the sake of perspicuity.

DOWNFALL OF JERUSALEM ;

FROM THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH.

How solitary doth she sit, the many-peopled city!
She is become a widow, the great among the Nations;
The Queen among the provinces, how is she tributary!

Weeping—weeps she all the night; the tears are on her cheeks;
From among all her lovers, she hath no comforter;
Her friends have all dealt treacherously; they are become her foes.—i. 1, 2.

The ways of Sion mourn: none come up to her feasts,
All her gates are desolate; and her Priests do sigh;
Her virgins wail! herself, she is in bitterness.—i. 4.

He hath pluck'd up his garden-hedge, He hath destroy'd his Temple;
Jehovah hath forgotten made the solemn feast and Sabbath;
And in the heat of ire He hath rejected King and Priest.

The Lord his altar hath disdain'd, abhorred his Holy
place,
And to the adversary's hand given up his palace walls;
Our foes shout in Jehovah's house, as on a festal day.
ii. 7, 8.

Her gates are sunk into the earth, he hath broke through
her bars;
Her Monarch and her Princes are now among the
Heathen;
The Law hath ceased; the Prophets find no vision from
Jehovah.—ii. 10.

My eyes do fail with tears; and troubled are my bowels;
My heart's blood gushes on the earth, for the daughter
of my people;
Children and suckling babes lie swooning in the squares—

They say unto their Mothers, where is corn and wine?
They swoon as they were wounded, in the city squares;
While glides the soul away into their Mother's bosom.
ii. 11, 12.

Even dragons, with their breasts drawn out, give suck
unto their young;
But cruel is my people's daughter, as the ostrich in the
desert;
The tongues of sucking infants to their palates cleave
with thirst.

Young children ask for bread, and no man breaks it for them;
Those that fed on dainties are desolate in the streets;
Those brought up in scarlet, even those embrace the dunghill.—iv. 3, 4, 5.

Behold, Jehovah, think to whom thou e'er hast dealed thus!
Have women ever eat their young, babes fondled in their hands?
Have Priest and Prophet e'er been slain in the Lord's Holy place?

In the streets, upon the ground, lie slain the young and old;
My virgins and my youth have fallen by the sword;
In thy wrath thou 'st slain them, thou hast had no mercy.

Thou hast summon'd all my terrors, as to a solemn feast;
None 'scaped, and none was left in Jehovah's day of wrath;
All that mine arms have borne and nursed, the enemy hath slain.—ii. 20. 1, 2,

Remember, Lord, what hath befallen,
Look down on our reproach.
Our heritage is given to strangers,

Our home to foreigners.
Our water have we drank for money,
Our fuel hath its price.—v. 1, 2, 3.

We stretch our hands to Egypt,
To Assyria for our bread.
At our life's risk we gain our food,
From the sword of desert robbers.
Our skins are like an oven, parched,
By the fierce heat of famine.
Matrons in Sion have they ravish'd,
Virgins in Judah's cities.
Princes were hung up by the hand,
And age had no respect.
Young men are grinding at the mill,
Boys faint 'neath loads of wood.
The Elders from the gate have ceased,
The young men from their music.
The crown is fallen from our head,
Woe! woe! that we have sinn'd.
'Tis therefore that our hearts are faint,
Therefore our eyes are dim.
For Sion's mountain desolate,
The foxes walk on it.

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